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Submission Guidelines

- Send two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and works cited), with one-inch margins. Include a disk copy of the manuscript in WordPerfect.

OR

Submit your manuscript electronically to both the editor (Ruthann.P.Wood@uwrf.edu) and the associate editor (stinsona@uwvax.uw.edu).

- Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

- Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications.

- Follow MLA format throughout.

The name, address, school affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail of the author should appear on the title page only, not on the manuscript. If the manuscript is accepted, the author will need to provide a disk copy of the manuscript in WordPerfect.

Meeting the Needs of Exceptional Learners (Spring 2000)
Deadline: February 15, 2000

Open Submissions (Fall 2000)
Deadline: September 15, 2000

Editors’ Note =

Censorship

Ernest Hemingway's 1925 book by Mark Twain, the "boy as a model of anti-Romanticism," is clearly the hero of the "boy" and the "Romantic Tom," as the story of an escaped orphaned and formerly as the champion of radicalism in "Huck Finn" is a buffer.

In a literary classroom, there is a place for "Huck Finn" to be sensitive to the literacies of the students, staff, and colleagues, and Anne D’Antonio, promoted not so much away from students, but to contemplate ideas that they cannot contemplate (Nicholas "Hidden Agenda").

Part I includes essays focusing on how hard we need the recognizing that "If stories we read in which case we must use power that authors classroom texts spe..."
Editors’ Note

Censorship in Wisconsin Schools

Ernest Hemingway once stated that all modern fiction began with a book by Mark Twain called Huck Finn. The novel, clearly Twain’s masterpiece, is a model of anti-Romanticism, and Jim, whose superstitions are based in reality, is clearly the hero of the story, clearly superior to the “Christian” Miss Watson and the Romantic Tom Sawyer. For decades, English teachers taught the novel as the story of an escaped slave who becomes the father whom the newly orphaned and formerly abused Huck has never had. They also presented Twain as the champion of racial tolerance. However, the fact remains that the Jim of Huck Finn is a buffoon, a laughing stock.

In a literary canon that is overwhelmingly white, male, and eurocentric, there is a place for Huck Finn. We’re not sure this place exists in a canon that is sensitive to the literary and social contributions of women and ethnic minorities. And we know first hand, having observed the genuinely pained looks on the faces of some of our students, that it’s a tough book to teach in a diverse classroom. We’re inclined to drop it from the curriculum. However, we’re forced to ask ourselves, is this selection or is this censorship?

This issue of Wisconsin English Journal will engage that debate. In Part I you’ll find essays which raise objections to censorship on various grounds: that it stifles intellectual freedom and the opportunities that reading good literature provides for personal growth (Sharyn Heili, “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”); that it violates students’ Constitutional rights and drives wedges between students, staff, and community (Anat Hakim, “Productive Outcomes in Barron” and Anne D’Antonio Stinson, “A Very Selective Memory”); that it’s being promoted not so much as a way to keep “dirty words” and “abhorrent deeds” away from students’ eyes, but because books have the power to make students contemplate ideas that those with a particular agenda don’t want students to contemplate (Nicholas Karolides, “Political Smoke and Mirrors: Censorship’s Hidden Agenda”).

Part II includes various pieces that suggest good ways to deal with censors and good reasons to select materials that best make our students’ reading experiences enlightening, empowering, and motivating.

You’ll find an account by Deb Brown of a hard-fought and encouraging battle against the censorship of Mark Mathabane’s Kaffir Boy; also, a group of essays focusing on reasons for being self-censors: Carolyn Majak’s article on how hard we need to look at literature we love, Michael Smith’s piece on recognizing that “If stories can help us, they must be able to hurt us as well”—in which case we must give our students strategies for containing the negative power that authors may have—and Jerry Koivinska’s exhortation to select classroom texts specifically and primarily for their moral value.
This section also includes a brief excerpt from an essay (and speech—delivered November 1998, NCTE Nashville) by Robert Cormier in which he explains how he learned the need for and value of self-censorship.

We would like to thank all of the dedicated professionals who have contributed to this issue. We think readers will find the materials herein informative, inspiring, and perhaps debatable. If you do, please sound off in a letter to the editors and we’ll try to print it in the spring issue. And speaking of the spring issue...our theme is meeting the needs of exceptional learners in schools and classrooms. If you have attitudes, philosophies, or techniques to share on that topic, please send them in writing to Ruth Wood at the address listed on the inside cover. We have been pleased with the contributions we've been getting and hope that you will continue to support WCETLA efforts by becoming a contributor to Wisconsin English Journal.

Ruth Wood, Editor
Anne D’Antonio Stinson, Associate Editor

**Censorship Problem?**
NCTE offers advice, helpful documents, and other support at no cost to K-12 teachers, schools, and districts that are faced with challenges to literary works, films and videos, or teaching methods. Leave a message for Charles Suhor, NCTE/SLATE Field Representative at 800-396-6283, ext. 3848, or call Suhor directly at 334-280-4758.

“**Oh, The Place With No Name**

Sharyn A. Medafe

Intellectual freedom was never a mind as a carefree girl grew. But they have become a dream.

I could always look at the books that I read about them, but she never was broadened because

I learned from the world were white in skin and clothes like we did in Valley and I also learned a few black pictures of the birthing that babies did not magically originally thought.

With my teacher humorous, sometimes interesting characters' lives in places I knew and slavery, about which

Finn is the most consistent.

From another Girl, I found the course from the Nazis to surgery

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In recent years offensive passages and removed from a middle was pornographic.

letters in support of kin

Another chap introduced me to a world impossible to imagine and feelings

white, Midwestern called

Mockingbird was called, it was alleged to do "Profanity, racial slurs, the challenges and re
PART I

"Oh, The Places You’ll Go"

Sharyn Heili, Marathon County Public Library

Intellectual freedom and censorship were the farthest things from my mind as a carefree girl growing up in the small town of Two Rivers, Wisconsin. But they have become a significant part of my life’s journey and my life’s work.

I could always read anything that I wanted. My mom would sometimes look at the books that I brought home from the library; she might make comments about them, but she never said that I couldn’t read any of them. And my world was broadened because of this.

I learned from National Geographic magazine that not all people in the world were white in skin color, and that in hot climates people did not wear clothes like we did in Wisconsin. To the horror of my friends’ parents, my friends and I also learned a few lessons in human anatomy from perusing issues at my house that were forbidden at their houses. Through close examination of actual pictures of the birthing process contained in nursing textbooks, I discovered that babies did not magically erupt from a woman’s stomach or have to be cut out as I originally thought.

With my teacher’s and my Mom’s blessings, I reveled in Mark Twain’s, humorous, sometimes irreverent, but never dull novels. I loved the dialogue, the interesting characters who seemed so different from me and lived such exciting lives in places I knew nothing about. Jim and Huck taught me about the South and slavery, about what it means to be free. Yet The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is the most consistently banned and challenged book in America.

From another challenged book, Anne Frank’s, The Diary of a Young Girl, I found the courage and strength of someone my age, forced to live hidden from the Nazis to survive persecution and death because of her religion. No history text did or could move me to understand the Holocaust as Anne Frank’s personal account did, or motivate me to read more books on the subject.

In recent years The Diary has been challenged because of “sexually offensive passages” and because it is a “real downer.” This past year it was removed from a middle school in Texas after parents complained that the “book was pornographic.” A few months later it was reinstated after students wrote letters in support of keeping it.

Another challenged work, Harper Lee’s novel, To Kill a Mockingbird, introduced me to a world of prejudice, hatred, and injustice that I could not imagine and feelings that were foreign to my experience growing up in a small, all-white, Midwestern community. In a New York school district in 1980, To Kill a Mockingbird was called a “filthy, trashy novel.” At the Warren, Indiana schools it was alleged to do “psychological damage to the positive integration process.” Profanity, racial slurs, and the use of the word “nigger” have been reasons for the challenges and removals of this novel from libraries and school reading lists.
Through the experiences detailed in the books that I read, I was free to examine and question what I had been taught and form my own conclusions, one of the components of intellectual freedom. Would I have become the same person without them? I don’t think so.

For example, as part of a North/South exchange program, I elected to attend a Black university in North Carolina in my sophomore year of college. It was the 1960’s, the height of the Civil Rights Movement, and I was excited about going South. In North Carolina, I experienced reverse discrimination. I learned that the term “nigger” was a term that I could not say to Black person but one that Blacks used affectionately toward each other. One night we exchange students were shouted at and refused service at stores near the campus because we were white, the minority. We were stared at, made fun of, and talked about. Would I have signed up for this program if I had not read books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Soul on Ice*, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, and *Native Son*, all challenged books? Probably not. My reading motivated me to explore, discover the truth for myself, experience, talk to people who were different yet very much the same as myself, and discover what it feels like to be in the minority.

As a newly graduated librarian in a public library attending my first Wisconsin Library Association conference, I overheard experienced librarians talking about attending a conference workshop on censorship. My fellow novices groaned about the topic. After all, they said, hadn’t everything been said that needed to be said and weren’t “those censorship people” fanatical? I went to the session and found that I knew nothing about the small, perverse ways that censorship could creep into library acquisition decisions and school curriculum decisions.

Years later, as a bookmobile librarian, when I told children who checked out books at school stops to read widely, to expand their horizons, they looked at me like I was crazy. I am sure I sounded crazy to them, but I firmly believe in the power that wide reading gives us.

If we force authors to be less than they are, do we, too, not become less than we are? Do we also become less as a nation when ideas are suppressed because someone objects or may object to them and tries to eliminate their availability? Author Judy Blume addresses this form of censorship in the June/July issue of *American Libraries* (1999) in which she states, “In this age of censorship, I mourn the loss of books that will never be written, I mourn the voices that will be silenced, [i.e.,] writers’ voices, teachers’ voices, and students’ voices, all because of fear.”

Fearful of controversy, editors, publishers, authors, or film executives “edit” or “censor” certain parts of a work before a public release. A recent example of this is Stanley Kubrick’s film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, which was altered because film executives were fearful that it might not receive an “R” rating from the Motion Picture Association of America.

In a custodial move, the Kansas Board of Education recently voted to remove most references to Darwin’s theory of evolution from the guidelines for teaching science in its public schools, basically banning this widely taught and accepted theory. Jacob Blum in the *Milwaukee Journal* reports that intellectual freedom in education strategies are not only in the hands of librarians, parents, grandparents, and teachers, but in the hands of pupils as well. They make the kind of decisions that will shape the future of the world.

Accepting this responsibility can be difficult. Intellectual freedom is a right of children, but it is not a right of librarians, parents, grandparents, or teachers. We need to fly high there in the deathly cynical world of censors or those who try to close the doors to books in schools, libraries, and classrooms.

What will happen? With any luck the censors, scientists, and research will solve the problems of censorship and recover; they will create new works of vision that will become visionaries before they are even glanced at a flower and discover that the doors are open and could not see the errors of their ways. This could be for all of us.

References


accepted theory. Jacquelyn Mitchard’s article “Education Has Evolved to This?” in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, September 5, 1999, speaks eloquently about intellectual freedom in responding to this decision: “People who employ such strategies are not only the worst sort of cowards, they are intellectual bullies. They make the kind of parents who think that the best way to protect children from the dangers or truths of the world is to lie to them about the dangers and truths of the world.”

Intellectual freedom is one of the greatest gifts that we can give children, but it is not an easy one. It requires constant vigilance by teachers, librarians, parents, grandparents, and other important people in children’s lives. We need to fly high the flag of intellectual freedom and educate the would-be censors or those who think that they know what’s best for children, communities, schools, libraries, and the world.

What will happen to those “intellectually free” children when they grow up? With any luck they will become the artists, authors, musicians, philosophers, scientists, researchers, teachers, and legislators of the next century. They will solve the problems of pollution, restore our rain forests, and help our planet recover; they will create masterpieces and discover new worlds. They will become visionaries because they were free to think differently; because they glanced at a flower and saw an arts center; because they marveled at a rainbow and discovered the cure for cancer. They were free to sail on a world of ideas and could not see the limits of their horizons. They became the best that they could be for all of us.

References
Mitchard, Jacquelyn. “Education Has Evolved to This?” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. 5 September 1999.
Productive Outcomes in Barron

Anat Hakim, Esq., Foley & Lardner, Attorneys at Law

On February 16, 1999, a group of students at Barron High School in Barron, Wisconsin, filed suit challenging the decision of the Barron Area School District Board of Education and the District Administrator of the Barron Area School District to remove two books, Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones, from the Barron High School library. The books were removed from the library because they did not conform to with the moral and religious beliefs of certain Barron school officials who disapproved of the books' treatment of homosexuality. In their lawsuit, titled Christenson v. Barron Area School District Board of Education, the students claimed that the removal of Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones was based on the books' content and therefore was unconstitutional under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The controversy that came to a head with the students' lawsuit in February 1999 dates back to March 1998, when the parent of a former Barron High School student requested a list of all books in the school library's collection that dealt with alternative or gay lifestyles. The list named fourteen books. Armed with the list, the parent sought to remove eight of the books from the school library based on her view that homosexuality is a sin, that anyone who did not condemn homosexuality as immoral was also immoral, and that the school district should not condone having such material in the school library. Ultimately, taking her request all the way to the school district's Board of Education, the parent succeed in having two of the books, Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones, removed from the library shelves. Two other books on the list that had also been challenged were temporarily placed back on the shelves until "more suitable" alternatives could be found. All four books were targeted by this parent and ultimately by the school board despite the fact that all had been written by well-known children's authors, recommended by educators, librarians, and literary reviewers for young adult readers, and won literary awards. The fact that all four addressed the issue of homosexuality, not as a sin, but from the young gay person's perspective, was apparently reason enough to ban them.

The Banned Books

Baby Be-Bop, written by American author Francesca Lia Block and published by Harper Collins, presents the fictional account of a young gay man's journey from denial of his homosexuality to self-loathing and self-destruction and finally to his own acceptance and validation of who he is. It follows Dirk, the lead character, through a series of challenges to his definitions of himself and the world around him. The book is praised for its honest portrayal of teenage girls, infatuated with the opposite sex, and its focus on the unique experiences of gay people. The book's themes of coming out, accepting oneself, and finding love are thoughtful and realistic. The Drowning of Stephan Jones, written by Chet exam, is a novel that tells the story of a teenage boy who has been murdered, and whose family is trying to come to terms with his death. The book is praised for its exploration of themes such as family, grief, and love. The two books were removed from the library because they were considered inappropriate for young adult readers.

Reasons for Banning the Books

The fact that the Barron Area School District had a policy of removing books from the library based on the parent's objections was made apparent by the list of books. For example, Is Gay, a book that the parent objected to, is about a young boy who is trying to come to terms with his sexual identity. The book's presentation of "[s]omething of moral and religious significance" was considered important by the parent. The parent's objections to this book for readers (i.e., "readers being successful in understanding the moral and religious significance of the book") made the parent recommended that the book be removed from the library. In connection with the book Is Gay, the parent objected that the book did not provide a balance in the treatment of children's sexual urges, stating, "Should the Barron Area School District present the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the Quran, and the New Testament as the textbooks and not the books that we get from the library?"

The parent's request for the eight-member Reconsideration Committee to review the challenges to books was granted. On August 20, 1998, the Reconsideration Committee reviewed the cases and ultimately decided to uphold the decision to remove the books from the library. The parent's right to challenge books was upheld, and the parent's objections were considered by the committee. The committee's decision was made based on the books' potential to harm young adult readers.
lead character, through his struggles with what it means to be different. *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, a fictional account by American author Bette Greene and published by Bantam, deals with first love, prejudice based on sexual orientation, and extreme religious fundamentalism. The book is about Carla, a teenage girl, infatuated with a local boy named Andy and friends with a local gay couple, Stephan Jones and Frank Montgomery. When Andy’s hatred for the gay couple leads to the death of Stephan Jones, Carla faces a moral dilemma, either to succumb to peer pressure and keep silent about the killing or stand up for what she knows is right and turn her friends in. In the end, Carla stands up to her friends and testifies against those who drowned Stephan Jones. Both books were praised as quality books for young adults and were recommended by various educational organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, and publications, such as *Booklist* and *Publisher’s Weekly*, for young adult readers.

**Reasons for Banning the Books**

The fact that these books were being removed from the Barron High School library’s shelves based on the objecting parent’s, the school board’s, and the District Administrator’s moral and religious opposition to homosexuality was made apparent by comments made in the course of discussing the removal of the books. For example, in her request to remove *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, the objecting parent complained that reading this book would result in “bigotry against Christians and the moral majority, and sympathy to the homosexuals and the sin of their lifestyle.” In her request to remove *Baby Be-Bop*, she objected to the book’s presentation of homosexuality, recommending that it be replaced with “[s]omething of moral value.”

This parent objected to another book on the list, saying, “The result of this book for readers (if they were not sure that they were gay) would probably be to pursue the lifestyle and not give the straight lifestyle a chance.” The parent recommended that *Two Teenagers In 20* be replaced by “family lifestyle books.” In connection with another book on the list, *When Someone You Know Is Gay*, the parent objected on the ground that “[T]here is no morality … [Children] could get ideas from this book on many different ways to take care of their sexual urges, some not being very wholesome in nature or normal.” She added, “Should the Barron Community expect less morality from our schools than what we get from our churches? As you stated to me when I asked if these books would be found in the Four Square School or my church library, [you said] ‘No.’ Why not? If they’re good enough for our school they should be good enough for church.”

The parent’s objections to all four books were forwarded to the school’s eight-member Reconsideration Committee, a committee appointed to deal with challenges to books. On August 13, 1998, with all eight members present, the Reconsideration Committee voted to retain the four challenged books in the Barron High School library based on the overall quality of the books in question. On August 20, 1998, the objecting parent appealed the Reconsideration Committee’s decision to the Barron Area School District Administrator.
The District Administrator Bans the Books

On August 25, 1998, the District Administrator overturned the Reconsideration Committee’s decision regarding two of the books — Baby Be-Bop and When Someone You Know Is Gay — and banned them from the Barron High School library. Justifying her decision to ban the two books, the District Administrator wrote that she has a “moral responsibility to ensure that the materials that we provide to our students reflect the moral and ethical standards of the community in which we live and work,” adding that “Barron is a Christian community that provides religious support through its many churches . . . . The school district relies upon its religious community and its service organizations in many ways.” The District Administrator went on to emphasize the need to give students “guidance from a caring, Christian community,” and that “character-building requires us to sometimes make choices for them.” As just one example, she objected to When Someone You Know Is Gay because:

It attempts to use biblical verses to defend homosexuality, while at the same time admitting that “the position of the Bible and the Judeo-Christian tradition . . . is that it is a sin.” This double-speak would not help any of our gay/lesbian students to understand what their church community’s view is. The information in Chapter 6 would, I believe, lead them to think that they are free to interpret the biblical references in any way they wish. I believe this is a dangerous viewpoint, although I recognize that it seems to be a rather popular one at this time. This viewpoint does a disservice to Barron’s religious community, and I cannot support it.

Apparently unsatisfied with the fact that the District Administrator overturned the Reconsideration Committee’s decision with respect to only two of the four challenged books, the objecting parent appealed the District Administrator’s (and the Reconsideration Committee’s) decision to retain The Drowning of Stephan Jones and Two Teenagers In 20 to the full Board of Education.

The Board of Education’s Decision

On September 21, 1998, the Barron Area School District Board of Education met in regular session to consider the objecting parent’s appeal. A significant part of the discussion at the meeting focused on the homosexual content of the two retained books — The Drowning of Stephan Jones and Two Teenagers In 20 — and the immorality of homosexuality. According to those who attended the meeting, it was clear from the Board’s discussion that the Board members were opposed to the ideas on homosexuality contained in the books. For example, the Board’s President expressed his belief that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice and a learned behavior and that, just as crack babies and the children of alcoholics do not necessarily grow up to be drug addicts or alcoholics, people do not have to grow up to be homosexual.

Other members of the Board voiced their agreement with such views. For example, at least one Board member said that homosexuality was an issue for kids to talk to their parents about, and that they don’t need to read books on the subject. Discussion was also given to placing the books until the District Administrator permits them to be placed on the shelves pending the outcome of the lawsuit. At the end of the discussion, ten members voted on whether a majority vote on Baby Be-Bop, When Someone You Know Is Gay and Two Teenagers In 20 should be removed from the Barron High School library. The vote was 10 to 0.

Following the vote, the District Administrator sent an administrative order immediately removing Baby Be-Bop, When Someone You Know Is Gay and Two Teenagers In 20 from the Barron High School library.

On December 14, 1998, which was to reconsider the Board of Education’s decision, the Barron Area School District Board of Education upheld the District Administrator’s decision to retain Baby Be-Bop, When Someone You Know Is Gay from the Barron High School library. The Board also modified the District Administrator’s decision to retain The Drowning of Stephan Jones and Two Teenagers In 20 by stipulating that the two books would remain on the shelves while the

The Lawsuit

On February 15, 1999, the Barron Area School District filed suit in federal district court in Madison, Wisconsin, against the Barron Area School District on behalf of the United States and the American Civil Liberties Union, represented by the law firm of Foley & Lardner. The suit challenged the school district’s policy of removing the two books from the shelves and prohibiting teachers from discussing the viewpoints in the books with their students. The defendants raised the issue of whether the defendants were able to take the action in accordance with the wishes of the school district without violating the plaintiffs’ right to free speech. The defendants argued that the plaintiffs were unprepared to place the books on the shelves while the
subject. Discussion at the meeting focused on the homosexual content of the books until the District Administrator explained to the Board that the United States Supreme Court had ruled that school officials could remove books based on their language but not their content. At that point, discussion quickly shifted to place more emphasis on the language used in the books.

At the end of its September 21, 1998 meeting, the Board voted 7-2 in favor of permanently removing *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* and *Two Teenagers In 20* from the Barron High School library. Although all of the Board members voted on whether *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* and *Two Teenagers In 20* should be removed, several members of the Board voting for removal had not even read the two books prior to voting. At this meeting, the Board did not vote on *Baby Be-Bop* and *When Someone You Know Is Gay*, the two books that the District Administrator already banned from the Barron High School library.

Following the Board’s decision on September 21, 1998, the District Administrator sent a memo to the Barron High School librarian ordering her to immediately remove all copies of the four banned books from library shelves. *Baby Be-Bop, When Someone You Know Is Gay, The Drowning of Stephan Jones,* and *Two Teenagers in 20* were promptly removed from the Barron High School library in September, 1998.

On December 21, 1998, the Board held another meeting, the purpose of which was to reconsider the Board’s decision to remove *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* and *Two Teenagers In 20* and also to reconsider the District Administrator’s decision to remove *Baby Be-Bop* and *When Someone You Know Is Gay* from the Barron High School library. At this December meeting, the Board upheld the District Administrator’s decision to remove *Baby Be-Bop* from the Barron High School library. In addition, the Board also removed *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*. The Board voted to return *Two Teenagers In 20* and *When Someone You Know Is Gay* to the school library shelves for 90 days, with the stipulation that the two books remain on the shelves only until “suitable” replacements were found.

**The Lawsuit**

On February 16, 1999, a group of Barron High School students sued the Barron Area School District, School Board, and District Administrator in federal district court in Madison, Wisconsin, alleging a violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The students, supported by the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin Foundation, and represented *pro bono* by the law firm of Foley & Lardner, sought a preliminary injunction from the court ordering the school to return the two removed books to the school library shelves and prohibiting any further censorship of books based on disagreement with the viewpoints expressed in those books. After the students briefed the issue, but before the court could even hear argument on the preliminary injunction, the defendants agreed to return the two books to the shelves during the pendency of the lawsuit and to not remove any other books from the Barron High School library during that period of time. The books currently remain on the shelves while the lawsuit is still pending.
The First Amendment Rights of Students

In Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Sch. Dist., 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969), the United States Supreme Court recognized that students “do not shed their First Amendment rights when they enter the schoolhouse gate.” Later, in Board of Educ. v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 863-65 (1982), the Supreme Court recognized that although local school boards have broad discretion in the management of school affairs, they are still required to act within fundamental Constitutional limits. As do other citizens, public school students have a First Amendment right to receive information and may not be denied access to protected speech simply because those in charge do not agree with the content of that speech.

The removal of books from a school library on the basis of content violates the First Amendment right to receive information. In Pico, the Supreme Court directly addressed the issue that was raised by the Christenson case: Does the First Amendment impose any limits on school officials’ discretion to remove library books from a high school library? The Supreme Court in Pico concluded that there are in fact limits on officials’ discretion to ban books from school libraries. Writing for the plurality in Pico, Justice Brennan wrote that local officials “may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books and seek by their removal to ‘prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.’”

According to the Supreme Court, the key inquiry in a book removal case is the school officials’ motivation in arriving at the removal decision. Thus, in book removal cases courts have looked very closely at the motivation of school officials that remove books from school libraries. Here, there could be no doubt that Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones were banned from the Barron High School library because they did not conform with the concepts of morality and religious beliefs of Barron school officials.

From the start, these books were targeted as part of a wider campaign against books that presented homosexuality in a manner inconsistent with the religious and moral beliefs of those who opposed them. For example, in her request for the removal of The Drowning of Stephan Jones, the parent who made the request objected to the book because it would result in “[s]ympathy to the homosexuals and their sin of their lifestyle.”

The decisive factor behind the Board’s removal of Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones, was the Board members’ personal disapproval of the ideas contained in the book. Though the Board’s official line was that these books were removed due to vulgar language and educational unsuitability, there is no basis to believe that the Board members meant by those terms anything other than their own disagreement with the ideas expressed in the books. School officials’ invocation of “vulgar language” and “educational suitability” as code words for their actions did not counterbalance the overwhelming evidence of their discrimination based on the content of these books. The Barron school officials’ attempts to avoid unconstitutionality under Pico were wholly pretextual.

Barron school board members removed Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones on the basis of their conceptions of manners and the moral order in which they disagreed about educational institutions providing the opportunity to purge diversity.

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Barron school officials also never identified what they considered vulgar about the books that were removed. They never discussed any specific language that purportedly led them to remove the books nor did they point to any evidence of the books’ educational unsuitability. In fact, it is surprising, given the District Administrator’s clear signals to the Board regarding what bases for removal are Constitutional, how much direct evidence there was showing that the substantial motivation for the Board’s and the District Administrator’s decision to remove these books was their opposition to the ideas expressed in the books. The only reasonable conclusion is that Barron school officials removed Baby Be-Bop and The Drowning of Stephan Jones because they intended to deny students at Barron High School access to ideas with which they disagreed and that this factor was the substantial motivation in their removal decision. In this way, school officials unconstitutionally sought to “prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.”

The case of Christenson v. Barron Area School District Board of Education is a significant one for the rights of students in Wisconsin and around the country. As the lawsuit proceeds through the courts, it is being closely watched as another test of the First Amendment rights of students. In addition, those who fear anti-gay intolerance and violence in the nation’s educational institutions are keeping a close eye on this case, seeing it as an opportunity to purge discrimination from the schoolhouse.

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A Very Selective Memory

Anne D’Antonio Stinson, UW-Whitewater

When we think of censorship in the schools, we automatically think of 
Huck Finn. Then, perhaps, the swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated, or any issue of 
Rolling Stone, or anything having to do with homosexuality. We don’t 
usually think of student writing as being in need (or in danger) of censoring. 
However, student newspapers and magazines are frequent targets of censorship 
in schools. During my own first year of teaching, my tenth grade American 
literature students created a literary magazine, The Hudson Chronicle, otherwise 
known as THC. These unfortunate initials, however, also represent the chemical 
substance present in marijuana. I knew this, but I also knew why they chose this 
name. We had recently been studying poetry by Emily Dickinson. Inspired by 
the line “I taste a liquor never brewed,” the students opted for a modern meta-
phor for the intoxicating effects of poetry. This title, however, along with a poem 
titled “Unprotected Sex,” sent up my danger flag, and I sought approval from the 
superintendent of schools before having the magazine printed. He looked at the 
cover and read the poem and decided that they were valid representations of 
what the children had been learning. With his seal of approval, the first edition 
of THC was printed. “Unprotected Sex” read as follows:

Soliciting, striving, waiting for nothing
and getting just that!
Beating, blinded by the intense
penetration [sic].
Lonely, Thirsty, hungry for life.
Needing, wanting,
settling for second best.
Ten minutes of pleasure,
ends in a lifetime of heartache and pain.
Pushing, feeling, bleeding inside.
Uncovered, relieved, the joy
that has been trapped for months on end.
A brief moment of joy.
Not expecting the agony of labor.

Mere hours after the magazine had been distributed, many teachers, 
having read just the first poem, “Unprotected Sex,” and the substance abuse 
counselor, who had read only the cover, stormed the administrator’s office. He, 
conveniently, couldn’t remember having seen the poem or the cover, and 
demanded it be recalled. A second version of the magazine was printed. This 
time, however, “Unprotected Sex” appeared with a large black block on top of it:

Interestingly, this "co...
Unprotected Sex

Censored

A brief moment of joy.
Not expecting the agony of labor.

Interestingly, this "concrete" poem had an even stronger message. Just in case
the censors didn't get it, however, a new poem was added to the front of the
magazine:

Violetated [sic]

Spring is nice because of all the pretty
Flowers. Flowers are clean and pure and never
Censored. What I would do to be a flower, to be
Able to grow and bloom without anyone holding me
Back. Soon someone will cut those flowers and they
Will just be a bunch of ugly weeds — that will pop
Up when they're not wanted.

The really frightening things about this story are how easily the
administrator changed his stance and how influential just a few voices could be. I
truly believe that the teachers and administrators at that school would not have
considered themselves censors. I'm sure they dismissed the student's second
poem as the emotional ranting of a teenaged woman scorned.

Censorship is that kind of evil. To paraphrase the poet, it pops up not
only where it's not wanted but also where it's not even recognized. So what's a
teacher to do? At the very least, we should give our students' work the respect
it deserves. I'm proud that I demanded that my students be allowed to respond
to their censors. I hope that my recognition and confrontation of the evil of
censorship will help them one day respect their own children's work.
Political Smoke and Mirrors: The “Hidden Agenda” of Censorship

Nicholas J. Karolides, UW-River Falls

The words “censored for political reasons” cast the shadow of a heavy-handed government blocking its citizens from receiving information, ideas, and opinions that it perceives to be critical, threatening, or embarrassing. This image, unfortunately, is too often reality. Even the governments of democracies are seen to participate in attempts to censor such critical material in order to protect their own perceived state security.

Further, the impression that censorship for political reasons emanates only from national governments is mistaken. The second common source of such activity is at the local community level. It is generated by school board members or citizens individually or in groups, who attack textbooks and fiction being used in school classrooms or available in school libraries. Public libraries are also victimized, although less frequently. In contrast to censorship challenges at the national level, challenges at the local level are to the political values and images that the challengers’ children are receiving. Over the years, the chief targets of political censorship have been socialism, communism, and the representation of the Soviet Union. Of parallel concern is the representation of the United States. The expression of flaws in American society is unpatriotic to these critics, who become concerned when past and present policies of their government are questioned in school textbooks and library material.

Before considering these general patterns of political censorship and specific examples, it is important to note that not all objections are formalized or publicly announced; some are reported only in local newspapers. Also, as Judith Kruse indicated in April 1996 at the IRA convention, for every reported incident, one should assume four or five unreported ones. (She noted that there were 740 reported incidents in 1995.) Some of these are administrative and are covered up.

Self-censoring by teachers and librarians is common. I recall the comment of a Wisconsin public librarian who accounted for the lack of challenges to her collection to her tactic of not ordering any books subject to censoring activities elsewhere. Further, not all attacks are identified forthrightly—it is apparently easier to cite a book’s offensive language than to protest its politics, the latter raising First Amendment issues. Lee Burress, our late colleague and esteemed anti-censorship advocate, uncovered and identified this assertion in his 1963 Wisconsin survey of challenges of books. (All together, he conducted five state and national surveys of censorship.) He referred to this mask, this subterfuge of targeting language instead of content, as the “hidden agenda” of censorship.

Political censorship is not a new phenomenon. In the recent past, the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1953 dictated the removal of The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx, and The Jungle by Upton Sinclair, from the

International Information of Wisconsin attacked volumes subversive of the United States was successfully barred from distribution. Books in Wartime. It was victimized by the public’s own publications, including the challenger was then removed as a chief document. In Boston about the “the

In contrast, have primarily focused on
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International Information Agency's overseas libraries. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin attacked these libraries, claiming that there were some "3,000 volumes subversive to American interests" by 418 authors whose loyalty to the United States was suspect. Similarly, *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo was barred from distribution to soldiers in 1943 during WWII by the Council on Books in Wartime. In like vein, at the local level in 1953 the Boston Public Library was victimized by the challenge of its holdings of "thousands" of Communist publications, including the *Communist Manifesto* and the *New World Review*, the challenger was the owner-editor of the *Boston Post*, while the *Boston Herald* emerged as a chief defender of the role of the library to inform the citizens of Boston about the "friends and enemies of their country."

In contrast, in recent years in the United States, national challenges have primarily focused on CIA exposés and revelations about the Vietnam War. Prominent among them are *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (1975), by Philip Agee, Frank Snepp's *Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End* (1977), and the infamous Pentagon Papers, officially titled *United States Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967* (1971).¹

*Black Boy* by Richard Wright faced numerous censorship challenges, partly because of Wright's membership in the Communist Party (from which he resigned in the early 1940s), and partly because of its negative portrayal of the status of black Americans in the South. The state of Mississippi banned it. Mississippi senator, Theodore Bilbo, scathingly condemning it and its author on the floor of Congress, stated:

> *Black Boy* should be taken off the shelves of stores; sales should be stopped; it was a damnable lie, from beginning to end; it built fabulous lies about the South. The purpose of the book was to plant seeds of hate and devilment in the minds of every American. It was the dirtiest, filthiest, most obscene, filthy and dirty [book], and came from a Negro from whom one could not expect better. (quoted by Webb in Karolides 47)

A more recent example of the censoring of materials by and about African Americans occurred in 1986 in Spring Hill, Florida: the principal removed *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* from the middle school library after a teacher complained that s/he saw a student with a copy. While ostensibly rejected for its obscene language, the book does project a negative presentation of the United States' involvement in Vietnam. The principal claimed he had "an unequivocal [sic] right to monitor the library collection." I suppose Senator McCarthy thought that he had the same right in 1953.

¹In cases at the national level involving national security issues, that is, involving former CIA employees as authors, the Supreme Court and federal courts have ruled against the authors. A central factor in these cases has been the breach of the contract agreement signed by CIA employees not to publish any information without approval. The major exception is the "Pentagon Papers" cases brought against the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. In this instance, the Supreme Court upheld the right of the two newspapers to publish materials from the Pentagon study without prior restraint.
Political issues are clearly evident in the 1986 challenging in Golden, Colorado, of the modern children's fantasy, *The Fragile Flag* by Jane Langton. Featuring a young girl on a world-saving quest, the book's thematic core is critical of expanding the nuclear arsenal of the United States.

A sixth-grade teacher objected to this book because of its portrayal of the United States government as "shallow," "manipulative," and "lacking in intelligence and responsibility." The teacher further claimed it did "nothing to promote children's respect for adults in authority," and that the story "amounts to thinly disguised anti-nuclear propaganda at best, designed to appeal to boys and girls who won't find much in their school libraries to balance this view." The book was not required reading. After considerable local uproar and the emergence of the Citizens to Revitalize Education group to promote the book's circulation, the teacher withdrew her request for the book's removal from all county school libraries.

Political censorship occurred at quite another level in the case of a picture book and 1969 Caldecott Award winner, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig. It features a young donkey who finds a magic pebble and who, overreacting to a threat from a hungry lion, turns himself into a rock. His alarmed parents search hither and yon; they eventually go to the police station. The police are depicted as pigs, as are other inhabitants of this community which also include dogs, chickens, and donkeys.

Police personnel around the country were offended, perhaps understandable on the surface; the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the ALA noted in 1969 a "nationwide campaign to remove [the book] from school and public libraries." Individual police officers as well as the board of directors of the International Conference of Police Associations complained. The secretary-treasurer of the Illinois Police Association wrote a letter which he sent to all Illinois law enforcement officers. Some librarians agreed. They were concerned about "subtle propaganda," about the loss of respect, about "molding the minds" of children. The chief of staff of the American Federation of Police, however, disagreed with these overt protests, claiming that attempts to censor "would only tend to prove to the critics of today's police that we are on the path to book burning and thought control."

What did Steig have to say? He said he liked pigs; the pigs in his book were "likable" with "no political or derogatory connotations whatsoever." He claimed that the book was completed before the word "pig" was used as a designation for a policeman.

A number of titles which I loosely group as historical fiction form another category of politically motivated censorship in conjunction with an appreciable number of history and social studies textbooks. Among these works of fiction are the titles *Andersonville* by MacKinlay Kantor (1955), *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck (1939), *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo (1938), *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James and Christopher Collier (1974), *Fields of Fire* by James Webb (1978), and *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Remarque (1928).

Along with a lack of belief in patriotism and nation, and sexuality (perhaps novels as "portraying a vilest sort," "promoting deviant behavior," and "drugging readers through the use of their hands"; authors had been cited for "inappropriate book distribution to American children.

One commenter of these books, bears repeating: "The sins of grinding poverty and infantilism are confronted and thus [are] never faced?" Robert Royster, he continued, "To read these books is like going through the book of Job and Mary Magdalene's orphans.

History and prehistory for their deficiency of biases! An 'unbridled,' "slanted view of history, yes," he example, charges that "fails to develop strong individual places undue emphasis on collectivism, national and promotes pacifism."

Karolides 299)

Repeated objections were made to such books, minority groups and individual minorities, the Soviet Union.

To this point: not to limit the range of issues under consideration, an overview of how the incident relates to a full range of views and perspectives reveals the development of censorship and need to have access to books for our children.

A Poetry Anthology:

In 1977 in *The Poetry Young Girl*," in an anthological selection specific target. Censorship treatment of smirking men screams at parents, the school community, and content of the poem was
Along with an array of complaints about obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, and sexuality (perhaps a cover, at least in part), challengers objected to these novels as “portraying life in such a bestial way,” containing “propaganda of the vilest sort,” “promoting class hatred,” and claimed they were “not uplifting” but drag readers through the dirt. Two of these books were challenged because their authors had been cited by the House Un-American Activities Committee. One book was censored because of its pacifism: its anti-war message was unfit for distribution to American soldiers.

One comment of a minister at a hearing, spoken in defense of several of these books, bears repeating. He asked, “Why is immorality seen as profanity and sexuality in Steinbeck, Salinger, and Kantor [while] the larger issues of grinding poverty and social injustice, of adult hypocrisy, of war camp atrocities [are] never faced?” Referring to a list of quotations from the challenged books, he continued, “To read the Bible as some folks read The Grapes of Wrath would be like going through the Gospels and seeing only tax collectors, wine-bibers, and Mary Magdalene” (quoted in Karolides 35).

History and political science textbooks have been frequently targeted for their deficiency of patriotism, for “downgrading our heroes,” and for their “slanted view of history.” The charge against Land of the Free (1965), for example, charges that the book:

fails to develop the great traditions of America, e.g., love of country, strong individualism, worship of God and private enterprise . . . and places undue emphasis on minor historical people, indoctrinates toward collectivism, mocks American justice, projects negative thought models, and promotes propaganda alien to the American ideal. (quoted in Karolides 299)

Repeated objections were to the attention given to the plight and treatment of minority groups and immigrants and perceived negative comparisons with the Soviet Union.

To this point, this article has illustrated that the censoring public wants to limit the range of ideas young readers are exposed to; what follows is an overview of how the Supreme Court has upheld the readers’ right to have access to a full range of viewpoints and ideas. A brief survey of pertinent court cases reveals the developing court doctrine with regard to the freedom to read and have access to books.

A Poetry Anthology: Male and Female Under 18

In 1977 in Chelsea, Massachusetts, a 77-word poem, “The City to a Young Girl,” in an anthology of poetry, titled Male and Female Under 18, was a specific target. Censorship objection: the 15-year-old student author’s resentment of being treated as “a piece of meat” and the lines, “One million horny lips-smacking men screaming for my body.” After receiving complaints from several parents, the school committee removed the anthology from the library. The content of the poem was the sole basis for its removal.
Suit was brought by the “Right to Read Committee” whose lawyers argued that the ban violated the Constitutional right of free expression of students, teachers, and the librarians. The judge in 1978 ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, stating, “Removing the book was a violation of the legal rights of the students, the parents, and the librarians; the right to read and to be exposed to controversial thought and language is a valuable right, subject to First Amendment protection.”

The district judge wrote of the library as a “mighty resource in the marketplace of ideas. The most effective antidote to the poison of mindless orthodoxy is ready access to a broad sweep of ideas and philosophies. There is no danger in such exposure…” The school committee decided not to appeal.

*Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas

In 1970 the school board in a Queens, New York, school district banned this graphic account of contemporary life in Spanish Harlem from students, but allowed access to parents of children in the school. A group of parents and teachers brought a suit in federal court asking for general circulation for the book. The district court dismissed the case, finding no Constitutional violation, and the appellate court affirmed that ruling. It argued that the administration of any library involves a constant process of selecting and winnowing of books based on educational needs, finances, and space; it did not perceive a Constitutional issue.

Several apparent factors indicate that the decision was not a Constitutional matter: there had been no dismissals of teachers or librarian; there had been no restrictions on the discussion of the book; the book was generally available in community book stores; and the decision to remove had been made after public debate. Having determined that the school board could remove *some* books i.e., selecting and winnowing, the court concluded it could properly remove any book.

There are flaws in this thinking as perceived by Constitution scholars. For example some students may not be able to afford the book or *all* books they might like to check out of the school library; this ban denied them access. Additionally, the public library may be less convenient than the school library, which is the most appropriate channel for students; the denial of Constitutional rights cannot be ignored just because there are alternative channels available.

*Cat’s Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut and *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller

Kurt Vonnegut’s 1963 science-fiction novel, *Cat’s Cradle*, and Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22* were removed from the Strongsville, Ohio, school library in 1972. Previously, *Catch 22* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, also by Kurt Vonnegut, had not been approved for use in high school English classes. The objections: the language and the content.

The ACLU sued on behalf of five students (*Minarcini vs. Strongsville City School District*). The school board argued in the U.S. District Court that only a school board has the right to determine which books are to be used in schools since it was elected to represent the people; an abridgment of this right would be unconstitutional. Books were unconstitutional. The court upheld the school board’s appeals decision which limited availability of the book.

However, the district court’s ruling to select books for school libraries as a function of library administration, the board’s “burden of proof,” and the reason for withdrawing the book from a meeting showed that there was no legal or political taste of some books being unconstitutional.

The appellate court held that the legal obligation to provide a library created such a privilege to place conditions on the use of books in a school or political tastes of some would make such books unconstitutional.

The appellate court held that the legal obligation to provide a library created such a privilege to place conditions on the use of books in a school or political tastes of some would make such books unconstitutional. The court decided that there were no Constitutional violations of First Amendment rights in that court cases having to do with officials of imposing restrictions on books. He explains that in New York, case and the Supreme Court doctrine” of the First Amendment explicitly stated, the case..

*Black Boy* by Richard Wright

A landmark case of 1962 was initiated in Wisconsin when a school board removed books from the libraries. Two were *The Black Boy* by Richard Wright, *Slave Ship* by Oliver LaFarge, the other was *Nothin’ But a Sandlot* by Charles Joiner. The generalizations: “in

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would be unconstitutional. The ACLU argued, in turn, that the banning of these books was unconstitutional because it is a violation of students’ rights. The court upheld the school board, basing its ruling on the New York court of appeals decision which supported a Queens school board’s authorization of limited availability of library books to parents in the *Down These Mean Streets* case.

However, the Ohio district’s court of appeals in 1976 overturned the district court’s ruling. It acknowledged the general authority of the school board to select books for school libraries and classrooms and the “winnowing” function of library administration. It recognized, however, that the school board’s “burden was to show a legally defensible and constitutionally valid reason for withdrawing the book” (O’Neil 145). The minutes of the school board meeting showed that several members of the school board had objected to the language and content of both books, that is, the authors’ views of life.

The court reasoned that while the state and the school district had no legal obligation to provide a library or to buy a particular novel, “once having created such a privilege for the benefit of its students . . . neither body could place conditions on the use of the library which were related solely to the social or political tastes of school board members” (O’Neil 145-146). Doing so was unconstitutional.

The appellate court placed emphasis on the school library’s function as an adjunct to classroom discussion, and it rejected the argument of alternative availability of the novels. A key factor: The Supreme Court had, in the interim between the two cases, given explicit recognition to an “emerging doctrine”: the First Amendment right to receive information and ideas. “Freedom of speech necessarily protects the right to receive.” Removal of a book from a school library—once a library had been created and books selected—required a legally defensible and constitutionally valid reason; placing “conditions on the use of the library related solely to the social or political tastes of school board members” is unconstitutional. Robert O’Neil in *Classrooms in the Crossfire* notes that court cases have focused on the patron’s interest and the actions of public officials of imposing personal standards on the contents of libraries and classrooms. He explains that in the four-year interim period between the Queens, New York, case and the Strongsville, Ohio, case, the Supreme Court’s “emerging doctrine” of the First Amendment right to receive information and ideas had been explicitly stated, that is, protected by the freedom of speech language.

*Black Boy* by Richard Wright and *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut

A landmark case that was eventually heard by the Supreme Court in 1982 was initiated in 1976 when the Island Trees (New York) Union Free District school board removed eleven books from the junior and senior high school libraries. Two were removed from classrooms. These included *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Laughing Boy* by Oliver LaFarge, the anonymously authored *Go Ask Alice*, and *A Hero Ain’t Nothin’ But a Sandwich* by Alice Childress. They were condemned with broad generalizations: “immoral, anti-American, anti-Christian, or just plain filthy.”
Black Boy and Slaughterhouse Five were more specifically politically challenged, although it seems possible to readily apply Lee Burress’s “hidden agenda” assertion, noted above, to some of the others.

In their suit, five students claimed their Constitutional rights had been violated under the guise of protecting their social and moral tastes. However, at the center of the controversy was the Constitutional role of the school board in public education in the selection of contents of library materials in relation to the perceived values of the community. The district court ruled in favor of the school board, but the court of appeals overturned this decision and remanded the case for trial. The Supreme Court, to which the school board appealed, upheld the appeals court in a sharply divided 5-4 decision (Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico). It mandated further trial proceedings to determine the underlying motivations of the school board. The majority relied on the concept that the “right to receive ideas” is a “necessary predicate” to the meaningful exercise of freedom of speech, freedom of press, and political freedom.

The focus of the Supreme Court’s majority opinion was whether the school board’s intention by their removal decision was to deny students access to ideas with which it disagreed; if this intent was a decisive factor, then it would have exercised its discretionary authority in violation of the Constitution. In the words of Justice Brennan, “Our Constitution does not permit the official suppression of ideas. . . .” Further, such access to ideas “prepares students for effective participation in the pluralistic, often contentious, society” (quoted in Karolides 50) in which they will soon be adult members.

The school board decided in 1982 to return the nine books to the library and thus not face trial.

I Am the Cheese by Robert Cormier

The Panama City, Florida, challenge against I Am the Cheese, winner of three awards, led to a massive banning of 67 books. The first complaint in 1985 was about vulgar language and the advocacy of humanism and behaviorism. The teacher, anticipating difficulty, distributed permission slips and offered alternative texts. She received 88 out of 92 permission slips, but the complainant wanted the book rejected altogether so her daughter would not be ostracized. The book was withdrawn by the superintendent of the Bay County School District, pending review by the district committee. The committee recommended the book’s reinstatement, but the superintendent did not act on the recommendation, thus, in effect, preventing its classroom use. Later, two other books were added to the initial request to ban I Am the Cheese: About David by Susan Beth Pfeffer and Never Cry Wolf by Farley Mowat.

The controversy heated up. The protesting parent specified: The book’s theme is “morbid and depressing,” the language—"hell," "sh*t," "f*ck," and "goddamn"—is crude and vulgar; sexual descriptions are inappropriate, i.e., a scene of two teens kissing, breasts identified as “large” and “wonderful” (Karolides 221). The parent’s father, who had been a school board member a decade earlier, further protested a “subversive theme . . . which makes govern-
ment agents out to be [a] devious hit team that killed the boy’s parents and now must kill the boy because he knows too much about the government’s activities.”

That summer the superintendent acted to reject the review committee’s recommendation and asserted that the book would cause readers to distrust government. Between public meetings which largely supported the teachers, the superintendent got board approval for a rigorous but negative adoption policy. Every book that had not been officially approved had to run this gauntlet. When the process was completed sixty-four classics were eliminated, ranging from the Oedipus trilogy to several of Shakespeare’s dramas (King Lear, Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice) to The Crucible, Brave New World, A Farewell to Arms, The Red Badge of Courage, The Glass Menagerie and Watership Down.

A suit (Farrell v. Hall) brought by 49 parents, teachers, and students asserted the denial of students’ First Amendment rights to receive information and denial of teachers’ rights of free speech and academic freedom. The trial was heard in 1988. The district court judge (Roger Vinson) gave neither side a clear victory and remanded the case for trial. He supported the plaintiffs with regard to the unconstitutionality of the suppression of ideas, but supported the defendants in their right to remove a book for language even because of one vulgar word. The process of selecting texts was determined to be within the rights of the school board; however, the board’s decisions might be challenged if deemed to be illegal or arbitrary.

The superintendent did not run for re-election. His successor was given a 60-day suspension of the trial so as to work out a resolution. It took three years under the auspices of the People For the American Way to establish a procedure for handling book challenges that was satisfactory to the teachers and the administration.

365 Days by Ronald Glasser

In Baileyville, Maine, in 1981, 365 Days was removed from the high school library by the school committee; an appeal from two students for its reshelving on a “restricted” basis was denied by the school committee. The focus was excessive use of four-letter words (rather than the book’s theme of death and dying in Vietnam or its anti-war tone).

In 1982, U.S. District Court Judge Conrad Cyr enjoined the school committee from banning the book. In ordering “interim injunctive relief,” the judge ruled that the plaintiffs had demonstrated that [they] will suffer irreparable injury if the injunction is not granted; that such injury outweighs any harm which granting injunctive relief would inflict on the defendant(s); the plaintiff(s) [have] exhibited a likelihood of success on the merits; and that the public interest will not be adversely affected by the granting of the injunction.

He ordered the book returned to the library shelves. In his memorandum, he wrote:

The right to receive information and ideas has been recognized by the United States Supreme Court: Public schools are major marketing places of ideas, and First Amendment rights must be accorded to all “persons” in the
market for ideas, including secondary school students, seeking redress of state action banning a book from the "warehouse of ideas."

How anomalous and dangerous to presume that state action banning an entire book, when the social value of its content is roundly praised and stands unchallenged by the state, does not directly and sharply implicate First Amendment rights because the ban was not intended to suppress ideas (quoted in Karolides 465).

In this last paragraph, Judge Cyr seems to go beyond the specific content requirement as part of the removal tactic: to remove the book for its language still involves a denial of its ideas.

These cases provide two recurrent themes: the library as the "warehouse" or "marketplace" of ideas, and the library's function as a significant adjunct to the classroom, which is also protected by the First Amendment. Clearly, the courts have recognized and ruled against the "hidden agenda" of censors. Nevertheless, since, in the words of Ken Donelson and Alleen Nilsen (1997), "...any work is potentially censorable by someone, someplace, sometime, for some reason; nothing is permanently safe from censorship, not even books most teachers and librarians would regard as far removed from censorial eyes" (377), it is essential that anti-censorship advocates be ever alert guardians of the freedom to read and to receive information and ideas.

The accounts of these attacks at local levels may seem to the glancing eye and the perfunctory or adventitious ear to be diversified and transient; those at the national level are less prominent but may appear remote and arcane. These multiple streams of anti-thought, however, combine to form a treacherous current. Its undertow can ensnare the mind in the tangled weeds of ignorance and irrationality. Denied both in individual incident and en masse is the sine qua non, the right of a fundamental inquiry, the ebb and flow of thought.

References

Turning Dissent

Deb Brown

Who should define censorship as a complicated question.

As a teacher related critical question, English language arts curriculum in the district near the university when a resident filed an autobiography Kaffir in the Association's top 100 (Harris), but my interest in this particular book, the parents, and/or complaints.

After a brief reaction, I will offer to teachers to use the
canons. Parents deal with censorship, the complain with the Board, the consensus-building with the the parents and/or community.

In the spring, Hocking High School is having a"recounting his childhood" in Johannesburg, where another resident, Pete Hill, an gifted program at the school, teachers, students, and the English department.
PART II

Turning Dissension Into Discussion

Deb Brown, Ohio University

Who should have a voice in making textbook selections and how to define censorship as it relates to individual schools in local communities are complicated questions.

As a teacher educator, I believe discussions about censorship and related critical questions should be included in methods courses for prospective English language arts teachers. An incident in a Southeastern Ohio school district near the university where I teach recently provided a "real world" example when a resident filed a complaint about the reading of Mark Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy*. The book appeared on the American Library Association's top 10 list of banned and challenged books in 1997 (quoted in Harris), but my intention in this article is not to argue for or against the reading of this particular book. Rather, I will use this recent incident to illustrate why it is important for school districts to have clear guidelines for dealing with complaints. After a brief description of the incident and the local school board's reaction, I will offer some suggestions for assignments and activities for secondary teachers to use to help prevent similar incidents and to help students and parents deal with censorship issues. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my intention is to argue that teaching something controversial can be a matter of consensus-building rather than a battle between "us," the teachers, and "them," the parents and/or community members.

In the spring (1999) Kellie Hayden, a junior English teacher at Federal Hocking High School, assigned Mark Mathabane's autobiography, *Kaffir Boy*, to her students to read. Mathabane describes life under apartheid in South Africa by recounting his childhood and youth in Alexandra, a Black ghetto of Johannesburg, where he was born and where he lived until he was 18 years old (ix). A resident of the Federal Hocking school district, Mark Dunfee, filed a complaint with the Federal Hocking Local School Board because of the language Mathabane used in a brief passage about sodomy. Another Federal Hocking resident, Pete Hill, and a teacher, Willis Korb, who coordinates the talented and gifted program at the high school, organized a community forum for parents, teachers, students, and area residents to discuss the book.

At the open forum held March 11, 1999, teachers, students, parents and residents all seemed to agree that the book has a "powerful message" about apartheid; however, the book's "use of strong language and even stronger visual descriptions, especially those involving abuse and sodomy," sparked lively debate (Hannon 3). Students, parents, community members, and teachers who spoke at the meeting expressed a variety of perspectives. For example, Frank Hare, the mayor of Amesville (a city in the consolidated school district), praised the English department for exposing students to accurate accounts of the world.
On the other hand, one parent, Jennifer Martin, said that “there’s some things [only] I should teach my kids” (quoted in Hannon 3) referring to the language and situations presented in Kaffir Boy. According to Melinda Tsapatsaris, an English teacher at the high school, one parent said that she usually supported teachers and felt she could trust them to make good choices of reading material for her daughter, but in this particular instance she felt the language and the graphic violence described in the book were things she did not want her daughter to hear at school. Just as the adults expressed varying opinions, so did the students in attendance at the meeting. While some students supported the reading of the book because it had prompted students to talk frankly about racism, others did not. One student who spoke against Kaffir Boy, junior Terry Macy, commented that she believed the book’s language and contents were “morally wrong” for young adults such as herself (Hannon 3).

Perhaps as an unintended consequence, the forum brought public attention to the fact that, although the school board had a policy regarding approval of reading lists, the board “hadn’t screened books for some years” (Gibson 3). As a result of the complaints filed about Kaffir Boy, the Federal Hocking Local School Board decided to revive their textbook review process and to approve “new high school English policies that alert parents to students’ reading assignments, mandate permission slips for sensitive material, and offer alternate reading options” (Gibson 3). Thus, in June (1999), the school board reviewed and approved a list of textbooks and reading materials for the 1999-2000 school year.

The high school’s list, which was submitted to the school board by a committee of teachers, adult community members, and students, included Mathabane’s Kaffir Boy. Following the new policies, the list was sent to parents of high school students at the end of July, and parents were invited to pick up copies of the books to read in advance. Also, individual teachers sent parents a list of books for possible use in their classes this school year (1999-2000); along with the list, teachers sent a permission slip for parents to sign and a list of alternate books for students who did not wish to read the assigned material. On September 8, 1999, Ms. Tsapatsaris reported that as far as she knew all parents and students had signed the lists of texts without any objections.

Although these new procedures are similar to suggestions often offered by educators, several other possibilities exist that may help classroom teachers promote understanding and prevent complaints. For example, Arthea Reed argues that a teacher should write an “educationally sound rationale” for using a book if she plans to assign the book for reading for an entire class (460). A rationale for selecting a particular book, sent along with the reading lists and/or permission slips, would make a convincing statement to parents. Shugert offered eight questions which a rationale should answer:

1. For what classes is this book especially appropriate?
2. To what particular objective, literary or psychological or pedagogical, does this book lend itself?
3. In what ways will the book be used to meet those objectives?

James E. B. Hannon concludes that censorship is to teach students to write and think with opportunities to understand that a particular work and its author should be judged by the teacher’s point of view. The American Library Association and the American Civil Liberties Union are working to ensure that students have access to a variety of activities, including the Internet. (For more information see www.ala.org/bbook)

A few examples of this may be a festival of movies or a contest to write a newspaper to write a newspaper article for a banned book. (125). Certainly, parents have the right to know about their student’s reading material in any country, freedom of information. Writing an essay about how to write an argumentative essay and identify the names of several materials; for example, one of the key points is how to use in first-year courses. In 504 secondary classrooms, the teacher used self-censorship to prevent students from reading books that deal with the issues of death, sex, or contexts; and (2) those teachers who supported using them also used a variety of methods, such as asking teachers; I asked classes if they had read any book that they would not read in class. Why? Why they would not read it in class.
(4) What problems of style, tone, or theme or possible grounds of
censorship exist in the book?
(5) How does the teacher plan to [address] those problems?
(6) Assuming the objectives are met, how would the students be
different because of their reading of this book?
(7) What are some other appropriate books an individual student might
read in place of this book?
(8) What reputable sources have recommended this book? What have
the critics said of it? (quoted in Davis 177)

James E. Davis (1992) argues that one way teachers can help prevent
censorship is to teach about censorship (178). One suggestion he makes is to ask
students to write rationales for books they read; this activity provides students
with opportunities “to examine their own perceptions and impressions” of a
particular work and “to study the issue of censorship prevention from the
teacher’s point of view” (178). Other suggestions Davis offers include celebrating
National Banned Books Week and studying the history of censorship. A
variety of activities for promoting Banned Books Week may be found at http://
www.ala.org/bbooks (Doyle 125).

A few examples of activities Doyle suggests are: (1) holding a film
festival of movies depicting censorship; (2) asking the student or community
newspaper to write articles about Banned Book Week; and (3) staging a mock
trial for a banned book and asking students to argue for and against the book
(125). Certainly, parents and/or community members would not file complaints
about their students studying such things as the history of censorship in our
country, freedom of the press, the Constitution and the First Amendment, and/or
how to write an argument and present it orally in a mock courtroom. Doyle offers
the names of several organizations that provide materials to help hold mock
trials; for example, Doyle reports that The Center for Civic Education (800-350-
4223) “develops curriculum materials to teach about the Constitution in upper
elementary grades and will send a catalog of items free upon request” (125).

An assignment that I have used to help students study censorship also
provides opportunities for them to practice a number of researching, thinking,
and writing strategies. The assignment, which was designed by a former gradu-
ate student, Tracy Guzzoio, includes asking students to read a book that has been
censored or challenged and to write an argument in support of or against
banning the book for a particular audience. Students must include at least one of
each of the following types of sources in their papers: (1) articles that explain
why, when, and where the book was banned/censored/ challenged; (2) articles
that deal with the issues of censorship in broad terms to provide definitions and/
or contexts; and (3) critical reviews of the book. Guzzoio designed the assignment
to use in first-year college writing classes, but it could be adapted for use in
secondary classrooms as well to give students an opportunity to discuss
censorship and to practice reading, researching, and writing arguments. I have
also used a variation of this assignment in methods courses for preservice
teachers; I asked class members to read a young adult novel and write a rationale
for including it on a reading list for a particular age group or to write an argument
about why they would not include the book on a reading list.
What all of these activities and assignments suggest is the importance of teachers knowing something about the social and educational issues in the communities in which they teach. If a teacher works in a school district that has clear procedures in place for dealing with challenges, considers the appropriateness for her particular school and community, and takes some steps to work with the community (for example, writing rationales for books and communicating with parents), then teaching something controversial can be a matter of consensus-building rather than a matter of “us,” the teachers, vs “them,” the parents and/or community members. Often, reports of challenges to books and articles or books about censorship use battle metaphors, placing teachers in positions pitted against parents and/or community members; for example, Davis wrote, “We literature and reading teachers are bombarded with criticism from all directions” (168). And McDonald lists titles of books about censorship that evoke images of war such as *Battle for the Mind* and *Classrooms in the Crossfire* (548).

But criticism of reading selections may be avoided when teachers and school administrators work with students and parents in a local community. English teacher Melinda Tsapatsaris said that, before the Federal Hocking High School town meeting, she had grown quite frustrated and “fired up” about the situation the complaint about *Kaffir Boy* had created in her school and community, but she felt “good” as she left the meeting because “so many people came together to talk” and “it was nice to hear students and parents speak out to support the teachers and the book.” George Wood, the principal at Federal Hocking, stated after the forum that the discussion was “one of the most powerful” he had “ever been involved in” throughout his years in the district (Hannon 3).

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from “A Book Side of Censorship,” An Evening with the Censor.

The scene I will describe here is one that troubled me. He is disturbed and frustrated. His name is John. He is a school principal and knows he needs to get the students to read more, but he is not sure how. He and I are in the presence of doubt in the reader’s mind.

Before I submit a schedule of titles to be read, I asked to read it. Not a question, or I would not have hesitated: the challenge was the school principal. I asked her to read this chapter on the social relations surrounding one chapter from the manuscript of my novel. She later in the novel, and her response was enthusiastic approval.

Eventually, the question of censorship was raised. In a friendly conference, I suggested that my novel, however, he paused, on the book. The question about the novel, and then made a sudden leap—no, I don’t know. Exact, he said, suggesting that ultimately abide by my own judgment.

That is how I feel mine is a work in isolation but is not a meaningless. That work is
from “A Book is not a House: The Human Side of Censorship”

Robert Cormier

In this excerpt from his essay “A Book Is Not a House: The Human Side of Censorship,” Robert Cormier discusses one lesson in becoming a self-censor.

The scene I wrote shows Archie alone in his bedroom, masturbating. He is disturbed and frustrated about what has been happening at Trinity High School and knows he must bring about a climax to the situation. The language was not graphic. There were no four-letter words. But there would also be no doubt in the reader’s mind about what Archie Costello was doing.

Before I submitted the novel for publication, my daughter, then fifteen, asked to read it. Not an unusual request, but this time I hesitated. And knew why I hesitated: the chapter showing Archie alone in his room. I did not want her to read this chapter. A solution presented itself. I simply removed that chapter from the manuscript, warned her that she might find a gap in the action late in the novel, and handed her the manuscript. She read the novel, gave it her enthusiastic approval, and said, incidentally, that she had not noticed any gap.

Eventually, the novel was accepted by Fabio Coen at Pantheon Books. In a friendly conference in his office, he made a few editing suggestions. Finally, however, he paused, obviously troubled. He said that he had one major reservation about the novel, a certain chapter that was well written and clever. My mind made a sudden leap—did he mean that chapter in which Archie masturbated? Exactly, he said, suggesting I reread the chapter once more. He said he would ultimately abide by my decision.

I knew instantly what I had done: I had been willing to inflict that chapter on other people’s fifteen-year-old daughters but unwilling to inflict it on my own daughter. I removed the chapter.

That is how I learned the lesson of self-censorship. That a writer works in isolation but is not alone. That cleverness for its own sake is hollow and meaningless. That writings is a two-way partnership between writer and reader.

1 Reprinted with permission from the author and from the publisher Boynton/Cook/Heinemann of Authors’ Insights: Turning Teenagers into Readers and Writers, ed. Don Gallo; Portsmouth, NH: 1991, 65-76.
Choice or Censorship

Caroline G. Majak, UW-Eau Claire

Question: What do the following books have in common: The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, and the American Heritage Dictionary? Answer: They were all challenged or restricted in some school district in the United States between 1993 and 1999.

You might laugh or think that it is ludicrous that such books were targets of censorship, but censorship is not funny. It is serious business. Censorship hampers the intellectual freedom of others. “Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons, individuals, groups, or government officials find objectionable or dangerous” (http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/censors.html). To continue:

When books are challenged, restricted, removed, or banned, an atmosphere of suppression exists. The author may make revisions, less for artistic reasons than to avoid controversy. The editor and publisher may alter texts or elect not to publish for economic and marketing reasons. Staff in bookstores and libraries may find published works too controversial and, fearing reprisals, will choose not to purchase those materials. The fear of the consequences of censorship is as damaging as, or perhaps more damaging than, the actual censorship attempt. After all, when a published work is banned, it can usually be found elsewhere. Unexpressed ideas, unpublished works, unpurchased books may be lost forever. (from 1999 Resource Guide as quoted at http://www.ala.org/bbooks/)

Each year attempts are made to censor or ban books in schools, libraries, and bookstores. A variety of reasons are given. The American Library Association reports:

Between 1990 and 1998, of the 5,246 challenges reported to or recorded by the Office of Intellectual Freedom, 1,299 were challenges to "sexually explicit" material, 1,134 to material considered to use "offensive language," 1,062 to material considered “unsuited to age group,” 744 to material with an occult theme or "promoting the occult or Satanism," and 474 to material with a homosexual theme or "promoting homosexuality." Other specific challenges were to material that dealt with religious viewpoints (373), nudity (276), racism (219), and sex education (190), or were thought to be anti-family (186). Almost seventy percent of the challenges were to material in schools or school libraries. Another twenty-six percent were to materials in public libraries. Sixty percent of the challenges were made by parents, sixteen percent by patrons, and almost ten percent by administrators.

(www.ala.org)
Books are most often challenged or banned because complainants believe that these books attack family values, contradict religious beliefs held, are too political, or are insensitive to the rights and feelings of minority groups.

The most frequently challenged books in 1998 as reported by ALA were: *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, *Goosebumps Series* and *Fear Street Series* by R. L. Stine, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, *Always Running* by Luis Rodriguez, *Crazy Lady* by Jane Leslie Conly, and *Blubber* by Judy Blume. While scanning the titles of books on this list or similar lists, one might cynically ask, “Are there really any safe books to share with children and young adults?”

**Freedom to Choose**

The personal preferences and opinions of a few people can potentially threaten the freedoms of many. Censorship is about removing choice; would-be censors assume that their personal preferences should be imposed on everyone. I disagree, even though there are some books I do not like.

Try as hard as I may, I just don’t like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. The fact that I am an African American certainly contributes to my discomfort. When I read the novel, it was difficult for me to relax, enjoy, or just detach enough to appreciate the value of the story. I felt as if I were being assaulted by the liberal use of the “n” word. The adventure, the humor, and the theme were insufficient to get me to appreciate this classic.

Do I think the book should be banned? Absolutely not! There are teachers who are capable of teaching *Huck Finn* so that it provides a forum for discussing history and language, specifically, the power of words. Some teachers are capable of sharing this literature with students in a manner that celebrates freedom and advances the discussion of racism. So while I would not personally recommend this book to high school English language arts teachers, I would not want it banned.

There are other books that I thoroughly enjoy, but they are flawed, imperfect; they may offend others. Such is the case with the picture book *What a Wonderful World* (1995) which is beautifully illustrated by Ashley Bryan. From the first time I read this book, I loved it. I bought it for my granddaughter and we “sang” the book together. I loved it so much that I bought the musical version of the same by Louis Armstrong to go with the book. I shared my treasure with students in children’s and young adult literature classes at the university. I shared it with teachers at national, regional, and state conventions. I recommended it in columns I wrote about quality multicultural literature. I was happy. Oh so happy until the day I learned that it contained a questionable illustration of an American Indian.

This new insight came while I attended an Advisory Board meeting of the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) in Madison. We were discussing a potential fund raising project for CCBC using a quilt that had been developed and based upon *What a Wonderful World*. I was so excited! A book that I
really loved had the potential for earning additional funds for one of my favorite organizations. In the midst of my euphoria, a librarian sitting next to me said softly (something like this): “I don’t like that book.”

Although a bit stunned by her comment, I wanted to learn why she didn’t like the book I loved so much. So I asked her, “Why don’t you like it?” “Look at the pictures,” she said. I looked, but I didn’t see anything. “Look at the Indian,” she said. I looked again, but again I didn’t see anything. Finally, she explained that the other illustrations were of children in contemporary attire, while the American Indian was in traditional dress. Her question was “Why is the Indian not in contemporary attire?” I had never noticed. Even though I had almost ten years of experience as a book reviewer/researcher of multicultural literature, I had never considered the attire of the American Indian child in this book as different or inappropriate. While this librarian, who is also an American Indian, never suggested that I not share the book with children, I had to decide whether I would continue to use this book with teachers of children and young adults.

I must confess. I still recommend the book to teachers. The book has a wonderful message. I also share lots of books that have photographs of American Indians in contemporary attire. I seek to put in the hands of teachers annotations of quality literature that accurately represent the experiences of American Indians both in the past and currently. Even though I know that this book might offend American Indians, I would not like to have it censored or banned. I would, however, recommend that teachers consciously look at a variety of quality books about American Indians to determine whether to include What a Wonderful World into their curricula.

I had freedom to choose. I am glad. All teachers need to have freedom to choose the books they judge to be appropriate to share with children and young adults. The task of selecting quality literature to share with children and young adults is one of the most rewarding responsibilities of English language arts teachers. With freedom, however, comes responsibility. This responsibility requires teachers to be vigilant about their own professional development. Teachers must read continuously. They must read a wide variety of books for children and young adults. They must also read book reviews and articles in professional journals and magazines. Some resources that they may find helpful include Language Arts, CCBC Choices, English Journal, Book List, ALAN Review, and Horn Book.

English language arts teachers should be viewed as the experts on literature. As such, they can explain and provide examples of quality literature. They also have clearly defined purposes for the books they share. They are aware of parental and community values. They also know which books have been challenged, banned, or restricted and why. There are a number of websites that make this information readily accessible to teachers (see information at the end of this article).

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resources for
Why Banned Books

“Censorship and
Rights, ALA C"
Removing Choice

Regardless of the knowledge and efforts of teachers, there will be frustrating and disturbing challenges brought about by would-be censors. Susan Church (1997) described the anxiety and anger which accompanied an attempt to ban a book series in her school district. Some parents found the hugely popular “horror thriller” Goosebumps series by R. L. Stine objectionable because of the “witchcraft” and “Satanism” they perceived to be in the series. Church reported that although the challenge was contentious, the fact that the school district had a review policy in place before the challenge assisted greatly in facilitating the process. During this particular challenge, would-be censors were rebuffed by other parents and children. Church reminded teachers that they are likely to find support within the community when books are challenged.

Skip Lowery (1998) also experienced challenges to literature during his career as a high school teacher. In addition to describing several challenges, Lowery offers the following recommendations: (1) do not attack someone’s objections as stupid or ill-founded; (2) welcome open debate; (3) organize staff and administration; (4) invite would-be censors to class; (5) ask would-be censors what they would like to substitute for the challenged book; and (6) remind any challenger that the attention created through the controversy surrounding a particular book often fuels interest in the book, thereby increasing the readership of the book that they wish to ban.

Teachers and their students need to be able to choose the books they want to read. Teachers need to make informed choices. School districts need to have policies in place before challenges occur. A democracy depends heavily upon an informed citizenry.

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This site provides a list of works that have been banned.

“Books That Have Been Challenged” by Patrick Gustafson
http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1998/05/19/fp55a2-csm.htm
This is a sampling of books that were challenged or banned from school libraries or curricula as reported in the Newsletter of Intellectual Freedom of March 1996 through March 1997. This list also briefly identifies the reasons given for each of the challenges.

“Censorship and Challenges”
www.ala.org/
This website is maintained by the American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom. Three specific segments at this site were quite useful resources for this article: “Censorship and Challenges,” “Banned Books Week: Why Banned Books,” and “Banned Books Week: Challenged and Banned Books.”

“Censorship and Challenges” begins with quotes from the ALA Library Bill of Rights, ALA Code of Ethics, Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Noam
Chomsky, and the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Topics discussed at this site include: “Why Censorship?,” “Censor in Action,” and “Opposing the Censor.” An entire segment is devoted to questions and answers about intellectual freedom and censorship.


“Censored”
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Taking the Back Seat
Resistance to Ideology

Michael W. Seltzer

Looking at the Flip Side

When I think of how I used to think about the time my mother and I read *Cinderella* in Land, saying “Read the book to the child, then tell the story,” I always think about the time my mother I gave it to you. I remember reading *Andrews and the Sugar Beet Field*, and you worked with students.

My experience has been like a book that has influenced me. It has been a way of answering questions. In an interview with the Annenberg School, George Gerbner realized the way he calls casting and family life. He also realized the socializing force has lifted us up, both young and older.

I think of story, and her story is *Cinderella*. What does the story about a girl, usually about the mistreatment at the hands of her stepmother, and how she is never lucky enough to be happy, and still gets happiness?

I’m afraid so. I’m afraid so. I don’t want to say something like, “We Keep: An Ethical Norms of Objectivity,” that a literary work can say that, and once we acknowledge that, it seems to me, I experience the unique, at the same time minimizing pedagogy, I believe, has an authorial reading.
Taking the Bad With the Good: Toward a Theory of Resistance to Literary Text

Michael W. Smith, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Looking at the Flip Side

When I think about key moments of my life, I often think about books. I think about the time my dad gave me Claude Brown’s Manchild in the Promised Land, saying “Read this. It’s something you should know about. Don’t tell your mother I gave it to you.” I think of the summer I read Henry Fielding’s Joseph Andrews and how it taught me that trusting people is okay even if you might get fooled once in a while. Learning that has had an enormous impact on the way I’ve worked with students.

My experience, of course, is not unique. Ask any English teacher about a book that has influenced his or her life and you’re sure to get a passionate answer. In an interview with Derrick Jensen (1998), George Gerbner, former Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication helps explain why: “The stories we tell about the world help form the world in which we live” (17).

But here’s the catch: If stories can help us, they must be able to hurt us as well. Gerbner realizes this all too well. For over thirty years he’s studied what he calls casting and fate in television shows and has argued that television as a socializing force has limited opportunities for women, for people of color, and for both young and older people.

I think of stories I’ve read my children. Here’s one I worry about: Cinderella. What does it tell my daughters, who are biracial, when they read a story about a girl, usually depicted as blond and blue-eyed, who acquiesces to the mistreatment at the hands of her step-sisters, usually depicted as more darkly complected, until she is rescued by a man? Here’s another: The Giving Tree, a story of a woman who gives and gives and gives to a boy then man who never reciprocates. A woman who allows herself to be destroyed through her giving and still gets happiness from doing so.

I’m afraid sometimes we forget the flip side of the coin. In The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction, Wayne Booth explains how “academic norms of objectivity” (3) keep teachers from treating seriously the contention that a literary work can be so dangerous that it should not be taught. However, once we acknowledge the influence that literature has had on our lives, we have to acknowledge that literature can have a bad influence. Such an acknowledgment, it seems to me, requires us to construct a pedagogy that will help students experience the unique and powerful way of knowing that literature provides while at the same time minimizing the potential dangers of certain texts. Such a pedagogy, I believe, has to be grounded in a recognition of the importance of authorial reading.
Get It?

The notion of authorial reading is based on the recognition that authors have to imagine their audiences in order to do their work. On the surface this doesn’t seem to be a very radical insight, but consider for a moment how it challenges a central tenet of much reader-response theory. One fundamental insight of at least some response theorists is that each reader comes to a text with a unique and complex set of beliefs, expectations, experiences, desires, knowledge and needs. In contrast, Peter Rabinowitz and I (1998) argue that although the characteristics of every individual reader are different from those of any other reader, no writer could imagine or appeal to all of those differences. Instead they have to base their rhetorical decisions on what readers have in common.

Some writers are fabulously successful at anticipating their audience. Think, for example, of Scott Adams, the creator of “Dilbert,” a man who has spawned what seems to be an entire industry of Dilbert spin-offs. What does he count on? He counts on a whole range of knowledge and beliefs. Part of that knowledge is knowledge of the genre in which he writes. He counts on our understanding how jokes work and knowing that our job is to get them.

I’ve been seeing the power of this knowledge when I read the comics with my eight-year-old daughter. When we finish a strip, she either laughs or, as is usually the case with “Dilbert,” says, “I don’t get it.” But she knows that there is something to get, and she looks to me for a succinct explanation of what that is. She never asks for that kind of explanation when we read a book together. She may not understand the motivation for a character or some turn of the plot, and she’ll ask about them. But she knows that stories can’t be reduced to a succinct explanation. She knows that getting a joke is much different than reading a story. Adams counts on more than our knowledge of genre, however. He also counts on our knowledge of bureaucracies and our suspicion of them. Catherine can’t get Adams’s jokes because she doesn’t have this knowledge.

And authors count on more than just what’s in our heads: they count on what’s in our hearts. I’d like to illustrate this point by turning to another of my favorite strips, Lynn Johnston’s “For Better or for Worse.” Last year Johnston spent several weeks of the strip chronicling the death of the mother of one of her characters. During those weeks, she counted on lots of knowledge: knowledge of who the characters are, knowledge of hospitals, and so on. But she also counted on our caring about those characters as we read the strip. Every serial does. Johnston may not have wanted us to lose sleep over the death of Elly’s mother, but she also certainly doesn’t want us to say, “Well, she’s only ink on paper. No need to be concerned.” That is, she counted on our pretending while we were reading the strip that her characters are more than ink on paper. She counted on our reading as though they are people worthy of our attention and concern.

Reading authorially, then, has at least two dimensions. It means pretending while we are reading that the characters about whom we are reading are people who are worthy of our attention and concern. And it means applying as best we can the knowledge of texts and the world that the author seems to be inviting us to apply.
It's important to recognize that reading authorially does not mean simply accepting the knowledge and beliefs an author counts on. It means provisionally adopting them, seeing them as a lens that we put on as a reader. And if we recognize them as a lens, we can also recognize when that lens distorts our vision, when it is something to resist.

Once again I'd like to use a simple text to illustrate the point. In Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature (1998), my co-author Peter Rabinowitz provides an example by contrasting three versions of the same joke:

You're sitting at lunch with a colleague who says, “Hey! I just heard a good one. Why won't a barracuda eat an IRS agent?” You reply, “I don’t know. Why?” Your friend chuckles: “Professional courtesy!” Now imagine the same scenario, but substituting the word “librarian” for “IRS agent.” Now imagine a third version, substituting the word “Jew.” (13, emphases in original)

Peter argues that this example establishes how authors presume genre knowledge. Anyone expecting a serious biological answer to the question will surely be disappointed. Moreover, the example establishes how authors are constrained by their audiences. Even though the second version of the joke is formally correct, it doesn’t work because it presumes an audience that doesn’t exist in this culture, one that presumes that librarians are an especially vicious class of people.

What’s most important for my discussion here, however, is the third version of the joke. As Peter argues, the easiest way to understand and respond to the immorality of the third version is to recognize what the teller of the joke must be presupposing about the hearer. Most of us have had the unsettling experience of being told a joke that offends us. What makes it unsettling? It seems to me that it’s being put into a group with whom we don’t want to affiliate. And once we have that unsettling experience, we often have a different and more critical view of the teller of the joke. The same is true for literature. And this is why authorial reading helps us take the bad with the good.

Let me explain. I don’t want to be reductive, but one way to illustrate the difference between what I’ve called authorial reading and other theories is to pose the central question of each. The question implied in my discussion of “Dilbert” and “For Better or for Worse” is, “What attitudes, knowledge, reading behaviors, values, and so on is the author counting on, and how do I feel about that?” The New Criticism, the theory that still informs most instruction about literature, at least in the secondary schools, seems to me to ask: “What does this text mean?” In contrast, most response-centered theories seem to me to pose a different question: “What does this text mean to me?”

These questions are different in important ways. Authorial reading challenges the privileged position of author. The New Critical question “What does this mean?” doesn’t encourage students to resist authors because their energies are devoted to discovering the meaning of texts that take on something
of the sacred. As Scholes (1985) points out, one influence of the New Criticism is that it conditions teachers (he includes himself) "to see the power [to select, shape, and present human experience] vested in the single literary work, the verbal icon." As a result "we have been all too ready to fall down and worship such golden calves so long as we could serve as their priests and priestesses" (20). The reader-response question "What does this mean to me?" doesn't encourage resistance because it does not provide anything to resist. Why resist what you have just created? In contrast, the authorial reading question "What would this mean for the audience the author was writing for and how do I feel about that?" encourages resistance both because it provides something to resist and because it gives students something to resist with: their ethical engagement in the characters.

As I argued above, authors count on readers believing while they are reading that characters are people worthy of our attention and concern. That is, while we are reading we ought to regard characters as not just tools that authors employ but as people about whom we should care and with whom we can dispute. This is crucial because what gives stories their ethical force is that they are usually centered on characters' efforts to face moral choices. As Wayne Booth explains, "In tracing those efforts, we readers stretch our own capacities for thinking about how life should be lived" (187).

Such thinking privileges the kinds of knowledge that students bring with them to class. Thinking about the moral choices a character makes doesn't require students to apply a specialized literary knowledge. Rather it calls for them to apply what they learned in their homes or churches or previous reading.

That's something I didn't always recognize. Since the theme of this issue is censorship, I want to take a provocative example: Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, one of the books most commonly attacked by censors. As you may recall, Steinbeck prepares readers for George's decision to shoot Lennie through an episode in which Candy lets Carlson shoot his old and suffering dog rather than doing it himself. I wanted my students to see the parallelism. What I didn't do was ask my students to play the authorial audience and consider thoughtfully whether George made a moral decision (I'm not sure that he did) and how they felt about Steinbeck's preparing them to assent to George's decision.

The authorial reading question brings authors into classroom conversations in a way that the New Critical question and reader response question don't. And when authors enter classroom conversations, students can hold them accountable for their ideas. They can also hold them accountable for how they treat their characters. A look at another controversial book can help clarify the point. I'd argue that the question of whether The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is racist ought to rest not only on Twain's use of the word "nigger" but also on how he expects the audience to respond to the way Huck and Tom treat Jim in the last episode of the novel. I think it's impossible to see humor in Twain's comic satire of romance novels unless one ignores Jim's humanity and his suffering at Tom's hands. I think that Twain counted on readers' ability to do just that, surely a racist assumption. But again, my students and I never talked about this issue. I was, I think, asking the wrong questions.
I am not saying that I endorse censorship. I am saying that as a profession we do a lousy job of making it clear to the public that we teach texts not to impose their ideology on students but to engage students in important ethical conversations. I am saying that we need to treat seriously censors’ argument that texts can harm readers. I am saying that we need to do all that we can to keep our students from experiencing that harm. To do these things we have to base our teaching on a theory that will encourage students to first respect, and then, when necessary, resist texts. The theory of authorial reading does just that.

As I’ve explained elsewhere (Rabinowitz & Smith 1998), teaching authorial reading means helping students understand that reading literature is a conventional act and helping them develop the conventional knowledge that authors expect them to employ. But perhaps more importantly, it means creating a classroom context in which students come to realize that the stakes of the game extend beyond classes and tests to the way they live their lives. It means taking authors and characters off pedestals and challenging them. It means helping students recognize their authority as readers and critics and especially as moral actors.

References
The English Teacher – Censor and Moral Influence

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The incidents of violence in schools across America have created a tremendous cacophony as parents, citizens, educators, and government officials have attempted to focus the blame for dysfunctional youth on someone or something in our culture. Each group points the finger at the others and demands that “they” do something to stop the violence. The roots of violence run far deeper than most are willing to admit, and those roots probably reach into each segment of our society. Everyone shares, in part, the responsibility of raising the next generation to be productive and functional members of the community. Because of the high profile nature of our task as educators, we are expected to shoulder a significant part of that responsibility.

Certainly, most of us as teachers recognize that alone we cannot be expected to change the attitudes and actions of a generation, but we can and should teach in such a way as to foster moral development and social responsibility in our students. As Bob Chase, President of the National Education Association, remarked to the Fourth Annual Character Counts! Coalition meeting, character education goes with the job of teaching. Every day, teachers are confronted with the consequences of neglecting character training in our culture. If Amitai Etzioni of George Washington University is correct in his assessment that half of the homes in America see no need to pass values to the next generation, America is in serious trouble. As English teachers, we have a unique opportunity to use our influence and the power of literature to exert a moral influence on our students.

At one time, to suggest that teachers could and should teach values in the classroom met with opposition from both sides of the political spectrum. That climate no longer exists. If Americans of all political persuasions can agree on anything, it is that children need to be challenged with a values system that emphasizes individual character. Of course, the issue of whose values are going to be taught raises many questions, but studies by groups like Character Counts! indicate that it is possible to arrive at a consensus which will be acceptable to most if not all segments of the community. Once the basic values that will be taught have been determined, we can then select literature which echoes those values.

At this point, the cry of censorship may be raised. But rather than reject out-of-hand the idea of selecting literature for its potential for moral instruction, we should consider the ramifications of allowing this generation of children and adolescents to grow to adulthood without the necessary character qualities which will make them productive and caring members of the community.
Since English teachers are already engaged in censorship, how can we use our influence to direct students to literature of a high moral tone? First we must determine what values we want to emphasize. This seems to be a daunting task, yet even in our pluralistic culture, common ground does exist. We can and do agree that violence, drugs, and promiscuous sex are some of the many evils that children and adolescents should be directed to avoid. What are some positive qualities upon which we can agree? The Josephson Institute has produced a list of six key character traits that can be used as the base from which a curriculum for literature can be constructed: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship (Character Counts!). These are character traits which are prized in every culture. Although this list is not exhaustive, it gives a focus to guide the literature teacher in the selection of materials to bring to the classroom. The challenge for teachers is to find literature that illustrates these core character values for our students and to design activities which will encourage students to make these values their own. For those who would still object that moral education is not our responsibility as teachers, perhaps Bob Chase (1999) can put the issue into perspective, “The fundamental tragedy of American education is not that we are turning out ignoramuses, but that we are turning out savages.”

The real challenge lies outside the traditional curriculum. Many who teach adolescents are confronted with the task of engaging the interests of students who find traditional literature boring. Can we move beyond the safety of an anthology to include poetry, stories, and novels which have contemporary themes and still use literature which supports the goal of character development? The answer to this question is obvious. Yes, we can use contemporary literature in the classroom to enhance character development. However, one must have firm criteria for the appropriateness of the literature to be used in the classroom.

Three criteria which are useful in evaluating literature for classroom use are gratuitousness, explicitness, and moral tone.

Gratuitousness relates directly to the purpose of the author and refers to why a behavior, action, or attitude has been included in a work. Consider Willa Cather’s O Pioneers for a moment. The undercurrents of sexual liberation which are at counter-purposes to the desire for character training would be objectionable, but within the larger context of Cather’s purpose the reader is confronted with the devastating consequences of promiscuity. The violent deaths of Marie and Emil are tragic, but emphasize the importance of fidelity in marriage.

An adolescent classic which deals with sexuality is Mr. and Mrs. BoJo Jones. Though not as controversial as when it was first published, the book addresses teen pregnancy and marriage. The consequences of a sexual relationship are not romanticized. The teenagers must face the realities of dropping out of school and trying to manage on their own. The author’s purpose is not to glorify teen sex, but to confront the reader with the difficult task of facing parents, the community, and their own expectations for life when a pregnancy results from irresponsible sex.
Explicitness requires the teacher to look at how graphic a behavior or action is portrayed in the work. If the goal for using a work is to enhance character development, the teacher must ask if the depiction of an objectionable act is too graphic to serve as a negative example. In Macbeth the murder of Duncan is alluded to in all of its gory details, yet the actual murder takes place off stage, and the events are told by the characters. The consequences for the murder of Duncan become the focus of the play, and one is powerfully persuaded that the consequences suffered by Macbeth and his wife are the justly deserved reward for murder.

In another adolescent classic, The Outsiders, gangs and violence are a significant part of Hinton's novel, yet the graphic is never so vivid as to overshadow the negative consequences that come into play in the story. One such example is the death of the Soc at the hand of Johnny. The knife, the slumping body, the flight of Johnny and Ponyboy are all compelling, yet Hinton makes it clear that the killing of the Soc has consequences which must be faced by Johnny and Ponyboy, again illustrating that the graphic can and must serve as a negative example if a work is to be used for character development.

The third criteria for evaluating a work is moral tone. The teacher must determine if the work as a whole supports the values that have been identified by the broader community as worthy of promotion. The question here is whether the objectionable behavior is repulsive to the reader. If the reader does not find the action repulsive, the work fails the test of moral tone. For example, in Shakespeare's King Lear, the main plot and subplot of the play revolve around the fidelity or infidelity of children toward their father. The central focus of the subplot is Gloucester whose illegitimate son deceives him and then stands by while his eyes are gouged out on stage for all to witness. This is certainly one of the most graphic scenes in drama, yet Shakespeare makes the behavior so vile that one is instantly repulsed by what has been witnessed.

A contemporary trilogy aimed at adolescents is Mildred Taylor's saga of the Logan family. The injustices of a racially divided South are graphically portrayed. One is confronted with lynchings, discrimination, and violence, yet Taylor never allows these violent scenes to dominate the story. One is always repulsed by the negative behaviors of both Whites and Blacks. The books serve as a powerful affirmation of the human spirit.

Every English teacher can cite examples of contemporary and classical literature which could be used with profit in the classroom to promote character training and moral instruction. We have a host of traditional anthologies as well as dozens of works which are not included in the traditional canon from which to design curricula which can provide the foundation for an education in character. We will be limited in this task only by our own resolve and commitment to use literature as an influence for moral training and character development.

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