





# BOOKS CHALLENGED OR BANNED

IN 2015-2016

Banned Books Week 2016 continues more than thirty years of celebrating—and protecting—the freedom to read. This freedom to choose what we read from the fullest array of possibilities is firmly rooted in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the amendment that guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Even as we enjoy a seemingly limitless and expanding amount of information, there is always a danger in someone else selecting what is available and to whom. Would-be censors come from all quarters and all political persuasions and threaten our right to choose for ourselves.

This year's Banned Books Week is focusing on the diversity of authors and ideas that have prompted a disproportionate share of challenges. ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom estimates that more than half of all banned books are by authors of color or ones that represent groups or viewpoints outside the mainstream.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in *Texas v. Johnson*, said, "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." Objections to sex, profanity, and racism in literature are the most common examples of attempts to censor, and most occur in schools and school libraries.

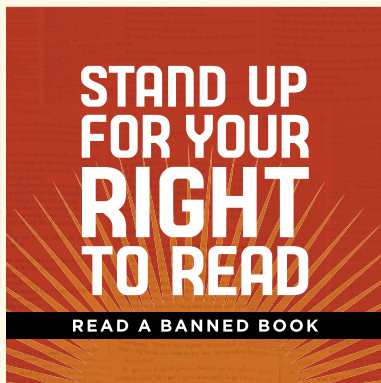
Individuals are free to choose what they themselves or their children read, but it is not a role for governmental or public agencies.

Attempts to censor—referred to as "challenges" in this list—are not mere expressions of a point of view; rather, they represent requests to remove materials from schools or libraries, thus restricting access to them by others. Even when such challenges are overturned and the book allowed to stay on library shelves, the censorship attempt is real and has an impact. Teachers may be reluctant to place the book on future reading lists, fewer copies may be bought or read.

This list documents both challenges and bannings, calling our attention to a practice that many think is no longer a threat. And in fact, it includes only a fraction of such attempts. The list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits. Surveys also indicate that up to 85 percent of actual challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported.

Some of the titles on the list will seem predictable, others might surprise. Because of the celebration of Banned Books Week since 1982, most of them are still available in schools and libraries. Don't take their presence for granted.

THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY REPRESENTS BOOKS CHALLENGED, RESTRICTED, REMOVED,  
OR BANNED IN 2015 AND 2016 AS REPORTED IN THE *NEWSLETTER ON INTELLECTUAL  
FREEDOM, JOURNAL OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND PRIVACY, AND AMERICAN  
LIBRARIES DIRECT (AL DIRECT)*.



(Dates prior to May 2015 indicate the controversy began earlier, but continued into 2015 or 2016.)

**Alexie, Sherman**

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

THORNDIKE PRESS; LITTLE, BROWN

Challenged, but retained in the Brunswick County, N.C. schools (2015) because, "Appeals to a book the school board has previously ruled on will not be considered for two years." A grandmother complained that the book "portrays bestiality and is pornographic." Not disheartened by the decision to retain, she said that she achieved her objective with the latest challenge—to inform parents about the book. The challenged contemporary young adult book is a National Book Award winner. It tells the story of a teenager who grows up on the Spokane Indian Reservation but leaves to attend an all-white high school in a farm town. The book has strong language, including racial slurs.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 117-18.

**Bechdel, Alison**

**Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic**

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN; MARINER BOOKS

Challenged as recommended, not required, summer reading for incoming freshman at Duke University in Durham, N.C. (2015) because some students objected to the novel's "depictions of lesbian sexuality, arguing that the book is borderline pornographic and they shouldn't have been asked to read it." Similar criticisms have been levied by opponents at other colleges and universities that have taught the book, including the College of Charleston—where state lawmakers threatened to defund the summer reading program for featuring it—and the University of Utah. Both institutions stood by the book, which

tells the story of a lesbian coming to terms with her own sexuality as she over time discovers that her distant father is also gay. Challenged, but retained at Crafton Hills College, a community college in Yucaipa, Calif. (2015) despite a student's request to remove the book because it was "objectionable." One of the most celebrated graphic novels of its generation (a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award), the theatrical adaptation won the Tony Award for Best Musical, and numerous other awards, in 2015.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 147-49; 161-62.

**Benioff, David**

**City of Thieves**

VIKING

Challenged at the RePublic Schools in Nashville, Tenn. (2015) despite the charter school operator redacting and changing portions of the book that were deemed "inappropriate" for middle school students. The 2008 work of historical fiction chronicles the perils and lives of two boys in World War II-era Leningrad and includes profanity and sexually explicit scenes. The author was a co-creator of the HBO version of "Game of Thrones" and writer of the script for the film adaptation of *The Kite Runner*.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, pp. 144-45.

**Bower, Bert, and Jim Lodbell**

**History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond**

TEACHERS' CURRICULUM INSTITUTE

Challenged as a supplemental history textbook in the Roxbury Township, N.J. school district (2015) by two or three parents saying the book glorifies Islamic

Jihad. After review by the district, the book was retained as a supplemental text from which seventh- and eighth-grade teachers could choose various activities that are educationally appropriate as they explore world cultures.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 55.

**Chbosky, Stephen**

### **The Perks of Being a Wallflower**

POCKET BOOKS

Removed from the required high school freshman English curriculum in Wallingford, Conn. (2015) by the school superintendent after a parent complained that the book included references to "homosexuality, date rape, masturbation, and the glorification of alcohol use and drugs." The novel was adapted into a film in 2012, which received mainly positive reviews; MTV, *Us Weekly*, and *Complex* named it as one of the best films of the year.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, May 2015, p. 69.

**Choldenko, Gennifer**

### **Al Capone Does My Shirts**

PUFFIN

Challenged on the New York state elementary- and middle-school reading lists (2015) because complainants said the book "perpetuates negative stereotypes by touting the infamous gangster Al Capone." The two sequels in Choldenko's "Tales from Alcatraz" novels were also challenged: *Al Capone Shines My Shoes* and *Al Capone Does My Homework*. Capone was a prisoner at Alcatraz from 1935 to 1939. The book was named a Newbery Honor selection, an ALA Notable Children's Book, and in 2007 it received the California Young Reader Medal.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, p. 96.

**Dawe, Ted**

### **Into the River**

MANGAKINO UNIVERSITY PRESS

Banned from sale and supply in New Zealand (2015) because it contains "highly offensive language, strong sexual descriptions (and) covers serious things like pedophilia and sexual abuse." The country's Film and Literature Board,

following complaints from family advocacy group Family First, took the book out of circulation. It was the first book banned in New Zealand in the last twenty-two years. On October 14, 2015, the Film and Literature Board lifted the ban, ruling by a majority that while aspects of the book were offensive it did not merit an age restriction. The novel is a coming-of-age story, and is intended for a young adult audience. It was awarded the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year prize and also won the top prize in the Young Adult Fiction category at the 2013 New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 146.

**Dawson, James**

### **This Book Is Gay**

HOT KEY BOOKS

Wasilla, Alaska, Public Library (2015) moved its entire young adult nonfiction to the adult stacks in response to a complaint about Dawson's book. Several Wasilla residents attacked the book at a city council meeting saying that "they didn't want 'gay books' or books about gay people in the library at all." For defending the sex education book for teens, the library director was branded as a pedophile in the highly controversial public debates.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 53.

**de Haan, Linda and Stern Nijland**

### **King & King**

TRICYCLE PRESS

Challenged at the Efland-Cheeks, N.C. Elementary School (2015) after a third-grade teacher read the book to deal with a case of bullying. The teacher said he read the book after a boy in his class was called gay in a derogatory way and told he was acting like a girl. Two parents said the book was inappropriate for children that age, and at least one said parents should have been notified in advance. The complaints were withdrawn after the teacher and vice principal resigned from the school. Originally written in Dutch, the book has been published in at least eight languages and a theatrical version has been performed from Vienna to Mexico City. The image of the princes kissing each other at their

wedding on the final page has been cited by social conservatives as "gay-rights movements undermining religious freedom."

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 118-19.

**Dorfman, Ariel**

### **Death and the Maiden**

PENGUIN BOOKS

Challenged as required reading in the Rumson-Fair Haven, N.J. high school (2015) because the play is "too sexually explicit for high school teens." An ad hoc committee of teachers, school board members, and a parent recommended that the play be moved off the summer reading list and instead be taught during the school year so teachers can guide the students as they read it. The play is about a former political prisoner who was raped by her captors. Years later, she believes she has found her attacker—a man who drove her husband home after a flat tire. She ties up her attacker and puts him on trial, with her husband acting as his attorney. The play received the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play in 1992.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, pp. 142-43; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 55-56.

**Foer, Jonathan Safran**

### **Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close**

MARINER BOOKS

Removed from the Mattoon, Ill. High School curriculum (2015) because of "its use of lewd and possibly offensive materials." The novel's narrator is a nine-year-old boy, Oskar Schell, who lost his father in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, and is convinced that his dad left a final message for him somewhere in the city. The book was named to the New York Public Library's "Books to Remember" list and to the American Library Association's Notable Books for Adults (2006). A film adaptation of the novel was released on January 20, 2012, starring Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 141; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 34.

**Forman, Gayle**

**Just One Day**

SPEAK

Challenged, but retained in the Rosemount, Minn. middle and high school libraries (2015) despite a parent's concern about "a graphic sex scene, underage drinking [and] date rape" and also "inappropriate language." The parent suggested the district remove it from all Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan libraries. The book centers on a teenager, Allyson, who spends one romantic day in Paris with a mysterious actor and later decides she must leave college and return to Europe.

Source: *AL Direct*, Nov. 24, 2015; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 53-54.

**Gaiman, Neil**

**The Sandman, Vol. 2:  
The Doll's House**

DC COMICS

Challenged, but retained at Crafton Hills College, a community college in Yucaipa, Calif. (2015) despite a student's request to remove the book because it was "objectionable." The series tells the tale of the ageless, anthropomorphic personification of Dream that is known by many names, including Morpheus. Begun in January 1989, the series concluded in March 1996.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 161-62.

**Green, John**

**Looking for Alaska**

DUTTON BOOKS

Challenged, but retained in the Lumberton Township, N.J. middle school (2015) despite a parent questioning its "sexual content." Awarded the 2006 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature, this coming-of-age story traces the journey of Miles Halter, a misfit Florida teenager who leaves the safety of home for a boarding school in Alabama and a chance to explore the "Great Perhaps."

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, pp. 163-64.

**Haddon, Mark**

**The Curious Incident of the  
Dog in the Night-Time**

DOUBLEDAY

Pulled as a summer reading assignment in the Leon County, Fla. schools (2015) because of the book's content and language. Moved from required reading to optional reading at Lincoln High School in Tallahassee, Fla. (2015) after receiving about a dozen complaints through telephone calls and e-mails about the book's profanity and atheism. The award-winning book is about a 15-year-old autistic child who investigates the death of a neighbor's dog.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, p. 146; Nov. 2015, pp. 140-41.

**Harper, Kathryn**

**Snow White and the  
Seven Dwarfs**

PEARSON EDUCATION, LIMITED

Removed from a Qatar school library (2016) after a book based on Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" was deemed to contain "indecent" illustrations. Officials from Qatar's supreme education council intervened following a complaint from the father of a pupil at the Spanish SEK international school, based in the capital, Doha. It is not known which images caused offense, but the book cover shows a smiling Snow White being held by the prince, who in the story revives her with a kiss after she eats a poisoned apple, English-language website Doha News reported.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 41.

**Henson, Jim**

**For Every Child a Better World**

GOLDEN BOOKS

Challenged, but retained in the Marshfield, Wis. elementary schools (2015), despite objections from a school board member and chairwoman of the Central Wisconsin Tea Party who thought the book too graphic—namely, that its illustrations of some children living in poverty and violence are inappropriate for kindergartners. The book, published in 1993 by Golden Press, is "written" by

Kermit the Frog ("as told to Louise Gikow and Ellen Weiss"). It was produced in cooperation with the United Nations as a fundraiser for the organization.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 56-57.

**Hergé [Georges Remi]**

**Tintin in America**

FRENCH & EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS

Pulled by the Winnipeg, Canada Public Library (2015) pending review due to stereotypical and racist depictions of indigenous peoples. The library eventually returned the book to general circulation, but in the adult collection, where it will be available to adult readers who want to see it for themselves or "carry on discussions with their children or others."

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, p. 93.

**Hernandez, Gilbert**

**Palomar:**

**The Heartbreak Soup Stories**

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Restricted to students, under the age of eighteen, unless they have parental permission at the Rio Rancho, N. Mex. High School library (2015) because it was "too graphic" for a high school library shelf. Included in *Time* magazine's Best Comics of 2003 list, and in 2005 was one of *Time*'s 100 best graphic novels of all time.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, p. 145.

**Herthel, Jessica, and Jazz Jennings**

**I Am Jazz**

DIAL BOOKS

Canceled as a planned reading in the Mount Horeb, Wis. School District (2015) after the Florida-based Liberty Counsel group threatened to sue. The children's book is the story of a transgender child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings. On July 15, 2015, the reality television series featuring Jazz Jennings premiered to positive reviews.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 35-36.

**Hopkins, Ellen**

**Glass**

MARGARET K. McELDERRY BOOKS

Removed at the Standard Middle School in Bakersfield, Calif. (2015) along with the two other titles in the "Crank Trilogy" after a parent complained about the sex, violence, drugs, and alcohol in the book. The book follows the life of a girl named Kristina and her battle with addiction to methamphetamine. According to Simon and Schuster's website, the book is recommended for children who are at least 14 years old. The novel was a *New York Times* bestseller, a Quills Award nominee, and was awarded the Book Sense Top 10, NYPL Recommended for Teens, PSLA Top Ten for Teens, Charlotte Award, IRA Young Adult Choices Award, Kentucky Bluegrass Award, SSLI Honor Book Award, and Gateway Readers Award.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 31.

**Hosseini, Khaled**

**The Kite Runner**

BLOOMSBURY

Suspended, but later reinstated as approved reading at the Buncombe County, N.C. schools (2015). The complainant, a self-described "conservative government watchdog," cited state law requiring local boards of education to include "character education" in the curriculum. She also said schools must teach sex education from an abstinence-only perspective. The book is used in tenth-grade honors English classes and parents can request an alternative reading assignment for the child. The *New York Times* bestseller is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of Afghanistan's monarchy through the Soviet military intervention, the exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the rise of the Taliban regime. A number of adaptations were created following publication, including several stage performances and a graphic novel. The film of the same name was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2007.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 96-97.

**Kean, Sam**

**The Disappearing Spoon:  
And Other Tales of Madness,  
Love, and the History of the  
World from the Periodic Table  
of the Elements**

LITTLE, BROWN; BACK BAY BOOKS

Challenged at the Discovery Middle School in Orlando, Fla. (2015) because "parts of the book are dark, and (the book has) some content that's rather questionable for a 12- and 13-year-old reader." The author views the periodic table as one of the great achievements of humankind, "an anthropological marvel." The book is full of stories showing how each element affected the people who discovered the elements, for either good or bad. The book was nominated by the Royal Society in the United Kingdom as one of the top science books of 2010 and named an Amazon "Top 5" science book of the year.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 140.

**Kilodavis, Cheryl**

**My Princess Boy:  
A Mom's Story about a Young  
Boy Who Loves to Dress Up**

ALADDIN

Challenged, but retained at the Hood County Library in Granbury, Tex. (2015) despite complaints that the book promotes "perversion" and the "gay lifestyle." The Hood County Library Advisory Board voted to keep the book in the library. The controversy comes at the same time as the Hood County Clerk refused to sign off on same-sex marriage licenses. The book is based on the author's son who prefers to wear clothes that some people consider feminine.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 93-94; Sept. 2015, p. 160.

**Kleinbaum, N. H.**

**Dead Poet's Society**

BANTAM BOOKS

Challenged, but retained at the Jersey CUSD 100 in Jerseyville, Ill. (2015) despite a complaint by a local pastor who found the book "disturbing, very close to a strong, mild pornography... To me that book represents a [disrespectful attitude toward] parents and their judgments.

It shows rebellion towards teachers, and has graphic immoral areas." Set at the conservative and aristocratic Welton Academy in the northeastern United States in 1959, it tells the story of an English teacher who inspires his students through his teaching of poetry. The 1989 film starring Robin Williams received critical acclaim and was a box office success; it was also BAFTA's best film and best foreign film in France and Italy. The movie also received the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 33-34.

**Lahiri, Jhumpa**

**The Namesake**

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

Recommended for removal by the ad-hoc literature committee of the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, School District (2015) because it contains "descriptions of sexual conduct that are too explicit for high school seniors." The novel examines being caught between two conflicting cultures with highly distinct religious, social, and ideological differences. A film adaptation of the novel was released in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and India in March 2006. The Indian-Bengali American author won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and was awarded the 2014 National Medal of Arts and Humanities at a White House ceremony.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 33.

**MacLaverty, Bernard**

**Cal**

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY

Challenged as required reading in the Rumson-Fair Haven, N.J. high school (2015) because the novel is "too sexually explicit for high school teens." The novel has been on and off the required reading list for juniors over recent years. An ad hoc committee of teachers, school board members, and a parent determined the novel was age-appropriate for the district's juniors and seniors. Published in 1983, the novel is about a young Irish Catholic man involved in the Irish Republican Army who falls in love with the wife of a man murdered in an incident

in which he was a getaway driver. The film of the same name was released in 1984 starring Helen Mirren.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, pp. 142-43; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 55-56.

**Marillier, Juliet**  
**Daughter of the Forest**

TOR BOOKS

Challenged, but retained in the Warrensburg, Mo. High School library (2015) despite a rape scene in the book. The book is an historical fantasy novel first published in 1999 and is loosely based on the legend of the Children of Lir and “The Six Swans” (a story that has many versions, including one by the Brothers Grimm). It was a finalist for the 2000 Aurealis Awards for Fantasy Novel and won the 2001 American Library Association Alex Award.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 54.

**Morrison, Toni**  
**Beloved**

KNOPF

Challenged, but retained as an optional summer reading choice in the Satellite Beach, Fla. High School Advanced Placement classes (2015). A parent admitted not having read the entire book when he addressed the committee in September, but wanted the book banned because of what he called “porn content.” Challenged on the Fairfax County, Va. senior English reading list (2016) by a parent claiming “the book includes scenes of violent sex, including a gang rape, and was too graphic and extreme for teenagers.” The controversy led to legislation (House Bill 516) that calls for the Virginia Department of Education to create a policy that notifies parents of the content and then allows them to review the materials. The novel is inspired by the story of an African-American slave, Margaret Garner, who escaped slavery in Kentucky in late January 1856 by fleeing to Ohio, a free state. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988, was a finalist for the 1987 National Book Award, and was

adapted into a 1998 movie of the same name starring Oprah Winfrey. A *New York Times* survey of writers and literary critics ranked it the best work of American fiction from 1981 to 2006.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 163; *AL Direct*, February 9, 2016 and March 4, 2016.

**O'Brien, Tim**  
**The Things They Carried**

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

Challenged in the Troup, Tex. School District (2015) because the book is “vulgar,” “complete garbage trash,” and “filled with sexual content and profanity.” The book is a collection of short stories about a platoon of American soldiers in the Vietnam War. Published in 1990, the book has received multiple awards such as France’s Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger Award and the *Chicago Tribune* Heartland Prize, as well as being a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Critics Circle Award.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 145.

**Pardi, Francesca, and Tullio F. Altan**  
**Little Egg (Piccolo uovo)**

LO STAMPATELLO

Banned by the Venice, Italy mayor along with 48 other children’s books from the city’s preschool libraries. Most of the books—destined for the city’s 28 nursery schools and kindergartens—never actually got to the libraries and are still packed up in boxes in various municipal offices. After an outcry—from residents, authors, publishers, librarian associations, and even Amnesty International—he whittled his list of banned books to just two. Pardi’s book, the tale of an unhatched egg that sees happiness in various family configurations, won the prestigious Andersen Prize in 2012, Italy’s top nod for children’s literature, even as a popular Catholic magazine cited it as a book to avoid.

Source: *New York Times*, August 19, 2015, p. A4.

**Perritano, John**  
**Amityville**

ROSEN PUBLISHING

Challenged at the Wake County, N.C. schools (2015) because a parent charged the graphic novel “was talking about a man who murders his family and shows a man walking with his shotgun going to his parents and his sister and brother.” The book is listed at an interest level for grades three through six, and a reading level for grades two through three.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 31.

**Pittman, Gayle E**  
**This Day in June**

MAGINATION PRESS

Challenged, but retained at the Hood County Library in Granbury, Tex. (2015) despite complaints that the book promotes “perversion” and the “gay lifestyle.” The Hood County Library Advisory Board voted to keep the book in the library. The controversy comes at the same time as the Hood County Clerk refused to sign off on same-sex marriage licenses. The book, about a pride parade, focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 93-94; Sept. 2015, p. 160.

**Satrapi, Marjane**  
**Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood**

PANTHEON BOOKS

Challenged, but retained at Crafton Hills College, a community college in Yucaipa, Calif. (2015) despite a student’s request to remove the book because it was “objectionable.” The book was a *New York Times* Notable Book, a Time magazine “Best Comix of the Year,” a *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Los Angeles Times* bestseller, the winner of the 2004 Alex Award, and named on the 2004 Best Books for Young Adults list. A film version was nominated for Best Animated Feature at the 80th Academy Awards in 2007.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 161-62.



**Skloot, Rebecca**

**The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks**

CROWN

Challenged as a summer reading assignment in the Knoxville, Tenn. high school system (2015) because a parent claimed the nonfiction book “has too much graphic information.” Henrietta Lacks was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and more. Winner of several awards, including the 2010 *Chicago Tribune* Heartland Prize for Nonfiction, the 2010 Wellcome Trust Book Prize, the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Award for Excellence in Science Writing, the 2011 Audie Award for Best Non-Fiction Audiobook, and a Medical Journalists’ Association Open Book Award, the book was featured in more than 60 media outlets, including *New York Times*, *Oprah*, *NPR*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 144.

**Steinbeck, John**

**Of Mice and Men**

BANTAM; PENGUIN; VIKING

Recommended to be pulled from classroom instruction and made available only on a voluntary, small-group basis in ninth-grade English classes in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho (2015). Its use of profanity—“bastard,” for instance, and “God damn”—makes the book unsuitable. In addition to the profanity, the curriculum committee found the story of two migrant ranch hands struggling during the Great Depression too “negative.” The 1937 novella is one of the best-known works of the Nobel Prize- and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and has been adapted often for stage and screen. On June 1, 2015, the school board voted 4 to 1 to keep the novella as an option for English teachers to assign their classes, rather than demote it to voluntary, small-group discussion as recommended by a school

district committee that is reviewing novels taught in the schools.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, July 2015, pp. 94-95; *AL Direct*, June 3, 2015.

**Stokstad, Marilyn**

**Art History: Eighteenth to Twenty-First Century Art, Third Edition**

PRENTICE HALL

Challenged, but retained at the Williamson County, Tenn. schools (2015) despite concerns from citizens who said the book was “political and too provocative.” One citizen commented that “It’s troubling to me that we can’t get a history book that puts a positive look on America. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher aren’t even mentioned.” The book is to be used in the Art and the American Identity class, a special course that will only be available to seniors who have already taken Advanced Placement (AP) Art History at Independence High School. The class had seven students enrolled.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, p. 164.

**Summers, Courtney**

**Some Girls Are**

ST. MARTIN’S GRIFFIN

Pulled from the freshmen Honors English I summer reading list at West Ashley High School in Charleston, S.C. (2015) after a parent complained about the novel’s dark and explicit content. The book is about a high school senior who is ostracized and bullied by her former friends after she reports an attempted rape by a popular boy.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 146-47.

**Tamaki, Mariko, and Jillian Tamaki**

**This One Summer**

FIRST SECOND

Removed from one elementary school library and restricted at three Florida high school libraries in Longwood (2015) in response to a complaint from a parent about the graphic novel’s language. It is a coming-of-age story about two preteen

friends, Rose and Windy, during a summer in Awago, a small beach town. The book won the 2015 Printz Honor, Caldecott Honor award, Eisner Award, and the 2014 Ignatz Award for Outstanding Graphic Novel.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 32-33.

**Texier, Ophélie**

**Jean Has Two Moms (Jean a deux mamans)**

FRENCH AND EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS

Banned by the Venice, Italy mayor along with 48 other children’s books from the city’s preschool libraries. Most of the books—destined for the city’s 28 nursery schools and kindergartens—never actually got to the libraries and are still packed up in boxes in various municipal offices. After an outcry—from residents, authors, publishers, librarian associations, and even Amnesty International—he whittled his list of banned books to just two.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 149-50.

**Twain, Mark [Samuel L. Clemens]**

**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**

BANTAM; BOBBS-MERRILL; GROSSET; HARPER; HOLT; HOUGHTON; LONGMAN; MACMILLAN; NAL; NORTON; PENGUIN; POCKET BOOKS

Removed from the Montgomery County, Penn. school curriculum (2015) after a group of students said the book’s use of the N-word made them uncomfortable and the students thought the school was not being inclusive. Since its publication in 1884, the book has caused controversy starting in 1885 when it was banned in Concord, Mass. as “trash and suitable only for the slums.”

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, pp. 34-35.

**Vaughan, Brian**

**Y: The Last Man, Vol. 1**

VERTIGO

Challenged, but retained at Crafton Hills College, a community college in Yucaipa, Calif. (2015) despite a student’s request to remove the book because it was “objectionable.” The dystopian science fiction comic book series was nominated for the first Hugo Award for Best Graphic

Story. Vaughan won the 2005 Eisner Award for Best Writer and the 2008 Eisner Award for Best Continuing Series. In 2015, the Eisner Awards entered Vaughan into the Comic Book Hall of Fame.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 161-62.

**Walls, Jeannette**

**The Glass Castle: A Memoir**

SCRIBNER

Suspended at the Ambridge, Pa. High School (2015) because the book is “racist and sexually explicit.” The challenged memoir is about growing up in poverty with a father who spent his money on alcohol and a mother who became homeless. Published in 2005, the memoir spent a total of 261 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and is now under development as a film by Paramount. By late 2007, *The Glass Castle* had sold over 2.7 million copies, had been translated into 22 languages, and received the Christopher Award, the American Library Association’s Alex Award (2006), and the Books for Better Living Award.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Nov. 2015, pp. 143-44.

**Winter, Jeanette**

**The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq**

HMH BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Challenged in the Duval County, Fla. public schools (2015) because a coalition of parents believes the book is inappropriate for promoting another religion that is not Christianity and is too violent for young children. Critics claim the book promotes “the Koran and praying to Muhammad.” The true story is about a librarian who sneaks books out of a library during the U.S. bombings in Iraq. The librarian works with members of the community to keep the books safe until the war is over and a new library can be built. Duval County public school libraries have a banned books list of ten literary

works, including Roald Dahl’s *Revolting Rhymes*, Tom Robbins’ *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, and Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*—which has also been removed from a textbook, reported *The Guardian*.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 145-46.

**Winter, Jeanette**

**Nasreen’s Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan**

BEACH LANE BOOKS

Challenged in the Duval County, Fla. public schools (2015) because a coalition of parents believes the book is inappropriate for promoting another religion that is not Christianity and is too violent for young children. Critics claim the book promotes “the Koran and praying to Muhammad.” Duval County public school libraries have a banned books list of ten literary works, including Roald Dahl’s *Revolting Rhymes*, Tom Robbins’ *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, and Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*—which has also been removed from a textbook, reported *The Guardian*.

Challenged at the Eau Claire, Wis. schools (2015) because the book contains an Islamic prayer. The book is about the Taliban taking control of an Afghan village and preventing girls from going to school. After Nasreen’s father is kidnapped and presumed killed, her grandmother smuggles her each day to an underground school where she can learn to read and write.

Source: *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, Sept. 2015, pp. 145-46; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, Spring 2016, p. 35.



**TAKE ACTION!**

# STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHT TO READ

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

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

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

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

# ACT NOW TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHT TO READ

## HERE ARE THREE WAYS THAT YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:



### STAY INFORMED

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

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

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

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

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

*You can speak up about the importance of free speech to education in a democratic society.*

As a regular participant in gatherings, you have the opportunity to learn about policies governing access to books and materials. You can witness firsthand when someone demands that a school or library remove a book or restrict access to books.

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

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

**The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom** ([ala.org/oif](http://ala.org/oif)) publishes *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* and provides regular news updates via the OIF blog and Twitter ([twitter.com/oif](https://twitter.com/oif)).

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

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

*You can participate by joining these nonprofit organizations.*

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

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

**The Association of American Publishers** ([publishers.org](http://publishers.org)) works to protect intellectual freedom and the right of free expression so that American publishers can continue to flourish in a free marketplace of ideas.

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

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

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

**People for the American Way** ([pfaw.org](http://pfaw.org)) is dedicated to making the promise of America real for every American by assuring equality, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to seek justice in a court of law, and the right to cast a vote that counts.



## CHALLENGE CENSORSHIP

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

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

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

### **Attend and participate in public hearings**

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

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

### **Write letters to public officials**

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

Let them know that your rights and your views are entitled to the same respect

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

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

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

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

### **Work with community groups**

*You can network with local organizations for support.*

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

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

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

Even a small number of persons can form an effective group to oppose censorship. Such groups allow members to share responsibility for attending meetings and conducting outreach efforts. By joining together you can become a resource for the community as a whole.

### **Seek assistance from national groups**

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

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



## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES

### **Join Library Friends groups and PTAs**

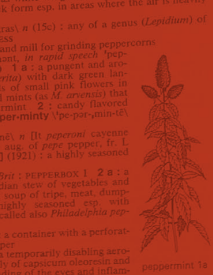
*You can become an advocate for  
community education groups.*

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

### **Participate in Banned Books Week**

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

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



**pepper** (pep-er) *n.* 1. a genus (*Lepidium*) of the family Brassicaceae, having a pungent fruit used for seasoning. 2. a pungent fruit of a plant of the genus *Lepidium*, especially one of the small pink flowers in clusters of the ornamental plant called *pepper*. 3. a candy flavored with pepper. 4. a highly seasoned food. 5. a highly seasoned person. 6. a highly seasoned speech. 7. a highly seasoned style of writing. 8. a highly seasoned style of painting. 9. a highly seasoned style of painting. 10. a highly seasoned style of painting.

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"Oh, my, God!" she yelled at everybody to hear. "That suit is so beautiful. It's so retroactive. It's so retroactive that it's radioactive!"

And every dude in the joint immediately walked over to her and pulled her into his arms. She was laughing and crying and shouting at the sign of my old bottom cheeks.

Even Roger, the huge dude I'd punched in the face years ago, was smiling and nodding at me. I was so happy to be alive, and so happy to be in a room where I was surrounded by people who were so happy to be alive with me.

But it didn't matter. Penelope thought I was beautiful and so I felt beautiful. And then she kissed me. The light was so bright. And Penelope was so beautiful. "Oh, my, God!" she yelled at everybody to hear. "That suit is so beautiful. It's so retroactive. It's so retroactive that it's radioactive!"

He pulled gently at her dress. Pecola began to move toward his house. When he knew she had agreed, Junior ran ahead excitedly, stopping only to yell back at her once on her way. He held the door open for her, smiling his encouragement. Pecola climbed the porch stairs and he waited there, afraid to follow him. The house looked dark and empty. "There's nobody here. My ma's gone on and my father's at work. Don't you want to see the kitchen?" Junior turned on the lights. Pecola stepped inside. How beautiful, she thought. What a beautiful house. There was a big red-and-gold Bible on the dining-room table. Little lace doilies were everywhere. Potted plants were in every corner. The picture of Jesus Christ hung on a wall with the words "I love you" fastened on the frame. She wanted to touch the flowers. "Here is your kitten!" Junior called. A big black cat right in her face. She sucked in her breath. "What's that?" He gave me a quick glance. Pushed up his glasses. Began scribbling again. "He's got a spot on his right lung. I want them to check it out." "A spot?" I said, the room suddenly too small. "Cancer?" Baba added casually. "Possible. It's suspicious, anyway," the doctor muttered.

I've been able to pay for the photographs. I knew that I'd rehearsed a speech about losing my wallet. I'd made it through the evening without revealing anything. I walked Penelope out to the parking lot, where I was waiting in his car. I'd give her a sweet little kiss on the cheek because her dad would have shot me if I'd kissed her while he watched). And then I'd wave her away. And then I'd wait in the parking lot until everybody was gone. And then I'd start the walk home. It was a Saturday, so I knew some reservations would be returning home from Spokane. And I knew I'd be able to get a cab home.

It was all seniors and juniors, upperclassmen who were going together. But Penelope was so popular, especially for a freshman, and I was popular by association, even as a freshman, too. Roger invited us to come along. Penelope was ecstatic about the idea. I was sick to my stomach. I had five bucks in my pocket. What could I buy with

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# SUPPORT

## BANNED BOOKS WEEK

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



### Sponsors:

- American Booksellers for Free Expression
- American Library Association
- Association of American Publishers
- The Association of American University Presses
- Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
- Dramatists Legal Defense Fund
- Freedom to Read Foundation
- National Council of Teachers of English
- People for the American Way

### Contributors:

- Association of Journalists and Authors
- National Association of College Stores
- National Coalition Against Censorship
- PEN America
- Project Censored

### Endorsed by:

Center for the Book in the Library of Congress

