Banned Books Week celebrates the freedom to choose and the freedom to express one’s opinion, even if that opinion might be considered unorthodox or unpopular. The campaign stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of those viewpoints to all who wish to read them.

Banned Books Week is sponsored by the American Booksellers Association, American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, American Library Association, American Society of Journalists and Authors, Association of American Publishers, and the National Association of College Stores. It is endorsed by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Books Challenged or Banned in 2007-2008

Robert P. Doyle

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American Booksellers Association
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
American Library Association
American Society of Journalists and Authors
Association of American Publishers
National Association of College Stores

Endorsed By:
Center for the Book in the Library of Congress
This bibliography represents books challenged, restricted, or removed in 2007-2008 as reported in the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Report from May 2007 through May 2008. (In some cases, the controversy began earlier, but continues in 2007-2008.)

The challenges documented in this list are not brought by people merely expressing a point of view—rather, they represent efforts to remove material from schools or libraries that others access without being deprived of the services of any kind, is being reported in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Although we enjoy an increasing quantity and availability of information and reading material, we must remain vigilant to assure that access to the material we need to be prepared for document as actual banings, in which a book is removed from the shelf or a library or bookstore or from the curriculum at a school. Attempts to censor can lead to voluntary restriction of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy. In these cases, material may not be published at all or may not be purchased by a bookstore, library, or school district.

We have reason to believe. Due to the commitment of parents, students, librarians, teachers, and other concerned citizens, more and more challenges are unsuccessful, and the reading material remains available. It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate approximately 20% of the challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported. Moreover, this list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibitions.

It is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or because of advances that the material or their children read, but they must not call on governmental or public agencies to prevent others from reading or seeing that material.

This freedom, not only to choose what we read, but also to select from a full array of publications to suit our tastes, should not be limited to specific viewpoints. Even if well intentioned, censors try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see, or hear.

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It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate approximately 85 percent of people in the United States have heard about challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits. This bibliography represents books challenged, restricted, or removed in 2007-2008 as reported in the Intellectual Freedom Report and Intellectual Freedom Bulletin from May 2007 to May 2008. It may be that the controversy began earlier, but continues in 2007-2008.

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

We have reason to celebrate. Due to the commitment of parents, students, librarians, teachers, and other concerned citizens, more and more communities are recognizing the value of literature and youth reading and are beginning to make the reading of books available to our teenagers. It is a sign of the health of our society that these controversies remain public and available for debate.

Freedom Writers. The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Wrote About Their Lives and Changed Each Other's (2006) is a memoir written by Erin Gruwell. Gruwell founded the Freedom Writers Foundation, which operates the Freedom Writing Project in schools, to teach students to engage in meaningful conversations about important social issues. The book chronicles Gruwell's development of the project and the students' reactions to it. She helped the students to commit their lives to changing the world, and the book is a testament to the power of writing to improve individuals and communities.

Hosseini, Khaled. Tripping over the Lunch Table (2007) is a novel that takes place in a middle school in California, where a group of students is confronted with the difficult task of dealing with bullying. The book is an exploration of the challenges that students face in their daily lives and the importance of standing up for what is right.

Richardson, Justin, and Peter Parnell. And God Said to Them, Men (2005) is a novel that is set in a small town in America and explores the relationships between the characters, the community, and the larger world. The book is a commentary on the complexities of human nature and the power of love and compassion.


Koertge, Ronald. The Boyfriend. Knopf. Challenged at the Howell, Mich. High School (2007) along with several other books because of strong sexual content. In response to a request from the parent of the Livingston School Board in Michigan, the Livingston County Sheriff’s Department published the following letter: “We have concluded that the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about adolescence deeply disturbed the appropriate topics of realism, race, and sex. The principal ordered teachers to stop over with the The Scarlet Letter in Michigan and restrict the book to the high school’s English literature classes. Administrative officials at the school did not decide whether to allow the book in middle or high school. Source: May 2007, pp. 14, 35.

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Welch, James. Fools Crow. Doubleday; Viking; Penguin. Challenged at the Helena, Mont. High School (2007) because of disturbing descriptions of rape, mutilation, and murder. Superintendent of the school says it was a “taxpayer-funded book” and that it was proper for a high school history class, but also that the book exposes some readers to what he calls “actual violence.” Source: May 2007, p. 117-18.


Stroud, Jonathan. Ptolemy’s Gate. Hyperion. Restored by the Lackawanna, N.Y. School Board (2008) along with several other books following accusations of censorship by some parents. The book was pulled from the middle-school library recommended list because of concerns that the book deals with the occult. Source: May 2008, pp. 116.


Vonnegut, Kurt. Slaughterhouse-Five. Dell. Challenged in the Howell, Mich. High School (2007) along with several other books because of strong sexual content. In response to a request from the parent of the Livingston Organization for Values in Education, or LOVE, the county’s top law enforcement official reviewed the books to see whether they are considered to be distribution of sexually explicit materials for minors. The book was pulled from the middle-school library recommended list because of concerns that the book deals with the occult. Source: May 2007, p. 117-18.


West, Stanley Gordon. Finding Laura Buggs. Lexington-Marshall Pub. Challenged in the Fargo, N.Dak. School District classrooms (2007) because the book includes passages on such topics as sexual bondage, incest, murder, and infanticide. According to district policy, the committee may not have standing to request formal or informal reviews because she doesn’t have a child in classes using the book. The complainant also contacted the Montana Department of Public Instruction and several state legislators. Source: July 2007, pp. 148-49.


Wright, Richard. Black Boy. Harper. Challenged in the Howell, Mich. High School (2007) along with several other books because of strong sexual content. In response to a request from the president of the Livingston Organization for Values in Education, or LOVE, the county’s top law enforcement official reviewed the books to see whether they are considered to be distribution of sexually explicit materials for minors. The book was pulled from the middle-school library recommended list because of concerns that the book deals with the occult. Source: May 2007, pp. 31-32; May 2007, pp. 117-18.