

7th grade

Reshelled, Restricted, and Removed Book Censorship Seminar

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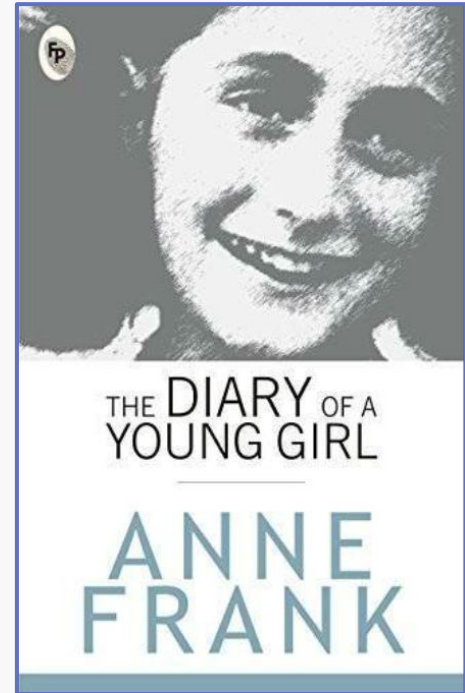
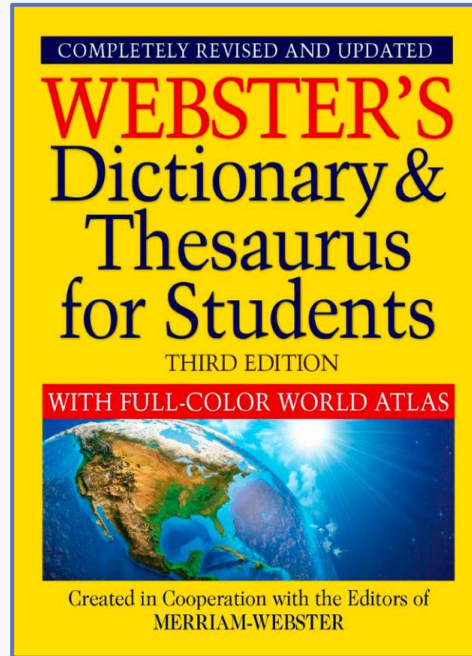
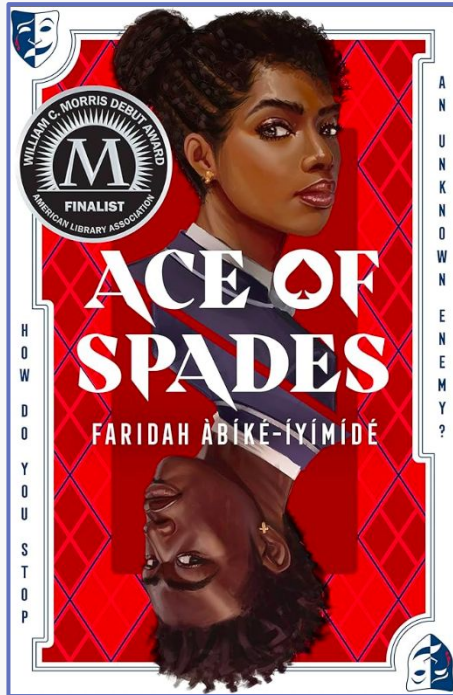


Section 1*



*Each section equates to a 45 minute class period

What do these books have in common?



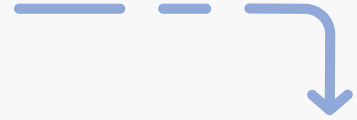


**They were all banned in
Escambia School County in
Florida with over 1,600 other
books.**





Overview



01 Introduction

What is censorship? What role does it have in the legal system?

02 Case Study

Evaluate different examples of real-life book banning situations.

03 My Research

My main arguments about book censorship.

04 Interactive Debate

Analysing counter-arguments in favor of book censorship.

05 Student Rights

What is it most important for students to know about their rights at school?

06 Survey

What did you learn from this lesson?





What is censorship?

What do you already know about censorship?
What do you think of when you see the word?



Which Definition?

Britannica.

The changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good.

Cambridge Dictionary.

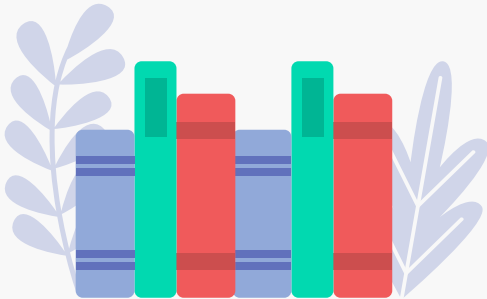
The action of preventing part or the whole of a book, movie, work of art, document, or other kind of communication from being seen or made available to the public, because it is considered to be offensive or harmful, or because it contains information that someone wishes to keep secret, often for political reasons.





The removal or restriction of ideas or information that a certain group or individual finds objectionable.

MY DEFINITION



Types of Censorship

Autonomous

Self-censorship, i.e. suppressing your own ideas



Legal

Information made unavailable by the government

Social

Keeping with social norms or avoiding controversial topics



Extralegal

Censoring without the legal authority and/or due process

What are some reasons that could cause these forms of censorship to happen?



Common Reasons for Book Censorship

Race

Not necessary to be taught, or challenges held beliefs



Violence

Graphic depiction of violent acts or events are seen as harmful

Sexual Content

Sexual acts, themes, or discussions are seen as inappropriate



Offensive Language

Slurs and curse words are seen as unnecessary and harmful in literature

LGBTQ+ Content

Shows LGBTQ+ characters, themes, or discussions which some find offensive or controversial

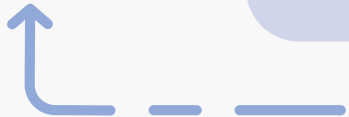
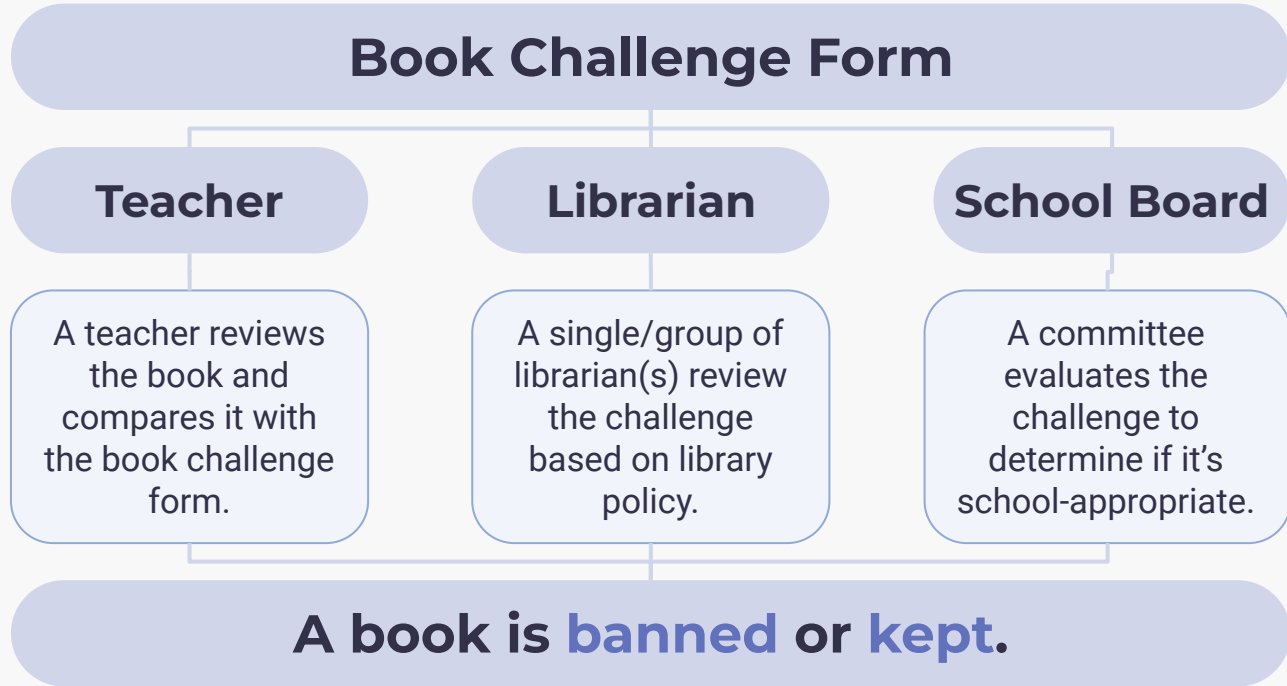


Mental Health Issues

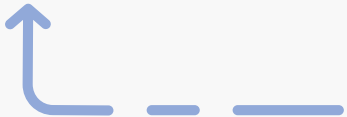
Shows characters facing issues with mental health which can be seen as too mature for students



⋮ How Challenges Are **Supposed** To Be Evaluated



⋮ How Challenges Are Often Evaluated



⋮ How Challenges Are Evaluated In Law

In general, books are challenged in law based on obscenity, which is not always directly related to school book challenges.

Obscene (n.): portrayal of offensive or disgusting material based on accepted standards of morality and decency.

Hicklin Test (1868)

If any part of the book, **taken out of context**, would “deprave and corrupt” the “delicate sensibilities”

Roth Test (1957)

If any part of the book, while **kept in context**, offended the **community standards**

Miller Test (1973)

If the book, **in context**, has “no serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific **value**” and is patently offensive

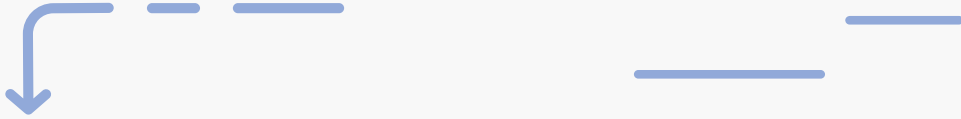




CASE STUDY

**How would you handle
this situation?**





Split into four even groups.

Each group will be assigned a case study, a hypothetical scenario about a book that was banned. **From your group's perspective,** determine...



1. What is your perspective arguing? Is it justified?
2. What would the impact of 'losing' this case be?
3. How would you argue against the other side?

Share out in 10 minutes!





Section 2*



*Each section equates to a 45 minute class period

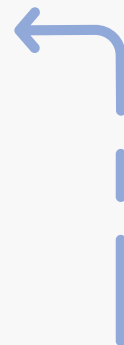
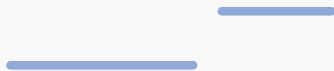


03

My Research

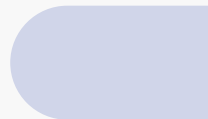
What did my senior project involve? What did I learn? What was my argument?





Book censorship is based on a legally flawed book-challenging system, leads to decreased critical thinking skills and unpreparedness for the future, and actively promotes a narrow view of the world by alienating and excluding underrepresented groups.

(Part of) My Thesis



My argument

**BOOK
CENSORSHIP
IS HARMFUL
BECAUSE...**

it is unconstitutional

it inadequately prepares students

it leads to a lack of representation





Book censorship is harmful because...

It is unconstitutional

Pico, 1982

The only Supreme Court case on book censorship: *Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico*.

"...school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books..."

- Upholds first amendment rights to freedom of speech and expression
- Makes **viewpoint discrimination** unconstitutional



Book censorship is harmful because...

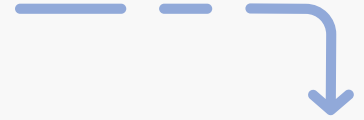
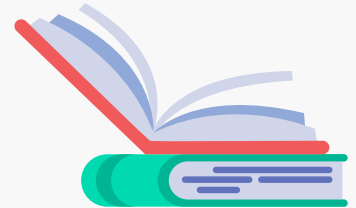
It is unconstitutional

Educational Gag Order Bills prohibit teachers from teaching or discussing any themes of sexual orientation, gender expression, or race. Teachers cannot support or endorse any of these topics, whether current or historical.

This is meant to keep teachers neutral, however, this forces teachers into situations where they could get in trouble for saying things like:

- Slavery is wrong
- People express their gender in different ways
- American foreign policy harmed marginalized groups

This also applies to the books they teach in class.





Book censorship is harmful because...

It inadequately prepares students

Reasons books are banned:

- Violence
- Sexual content
- Language
- Substance Use
- Controversial ideas of race
- Controversial ideas of gender and sexuality

All of these things exist in everyday life!

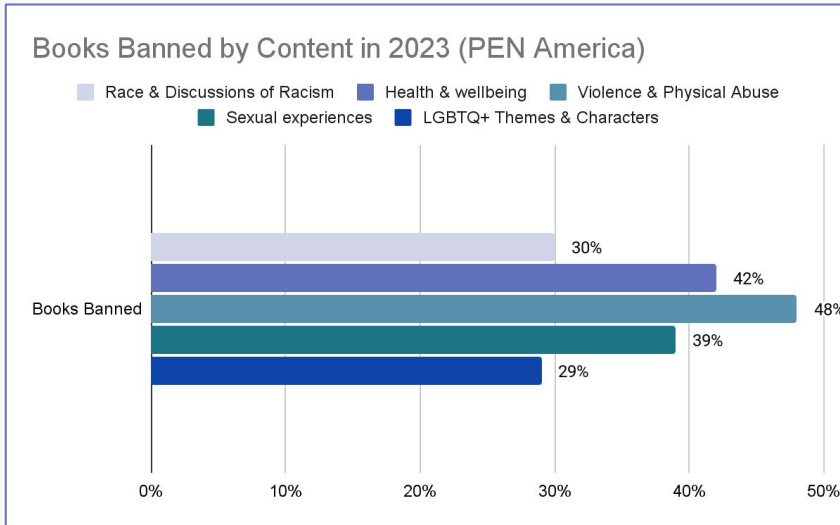
In school, students should be learning how to **critically think** about subjects and understand them from multiple points of views.

This pushes students to be more empathetic and advocacy-minded.



Book censorship is harmful because...

It leads to a lack of representation



“[Book censorship] inhibits future generations from developing the cross-cultural understanding, compassion, and mutual respect that is necessary to build bridges and thrive in our increasingly diverse state”

– Mary Topaum,
Director of the American Indian Movement Indian Territory in Oklahoma



Book censorship is harmful because...

It leads to a lack of representation

Representation

- **34% lower** odds of suicide for LGBTQ+ youth in **supportive environments**
- **71% of adults** believe that (high school) **students should play an active role** in “decisions about what subjects are taught in classrooms,” after teachers

No Representation

- LGBTQ+ youth are **3x more likely** to consider suicide in a “**very unaccepting space**” compared to a “very accepting space”
- **14% increase** in reported **bullying** from 2019 to 2023

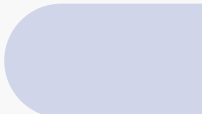







DEBATE

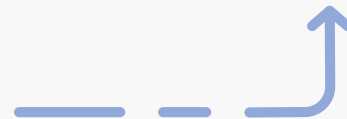

Addressing Counter Arguments

Go to one side of the classroom if you agree with a statement, and to the other if you disagree.
Be prepared to defend your position.





**Parents should have
complete control over
what books are
available to their
children at schools.**



AGREE



DISAGREE

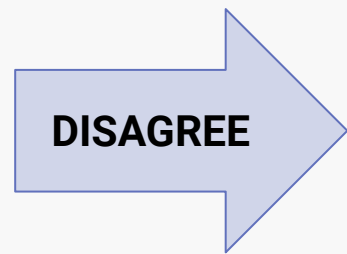
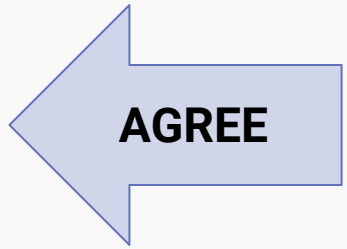
Argument over Parental Rights

- According to **Miami-Dade**, parents have the right to restrict or censor what their child reads in any way
- They do NOT have the right to restrict or censor what other parents' children read

Parents should have complete control over what books are available to their children at schools.



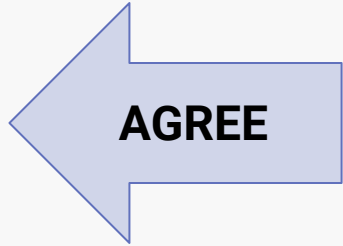
**Controversial material
(such as race, gender,
politics, etc) should not
be discussed in school.**



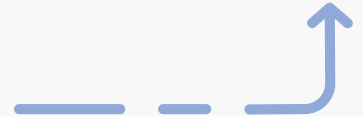
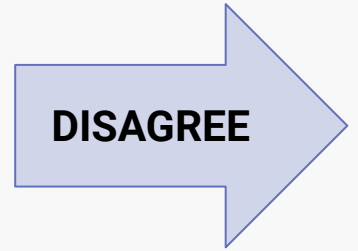
Defining “Controversy”

- There is no “**common sense interpretation**” (singular interpretation of a text)
- “Banned books bring up uneasy topics... Uneasiness can be used to **generate, rather than shut down, conversations** in the English classroom.” - Alyssa Niccolini

Controversial material (such as race, gender, politics, etc) should not be discussed in school.



**Books that showcase
different people and
ideas will change the
way the reader thinks.**



Indoctrination vs Perspective

- **Indoctrination:** students are “**passive** receivers of values”
- **Education:** students are “**active** agents in pedagogy”
- Reading books with diverse topics make people **more open- and civic-minded**, and has no impact on violence, behavioral problems, or sexuality

Books that showcase different people and ideas will change the way the reader thinks.



Section 3*



*Each section equates to a 45 minute class period



Student Rights

Understanding your rights as students is very important because:

- Supports student well-being
- Empowers student advocacy
- Creates better informed future adults
- Keeps adults and educators accountable



Tinker v Des Moines

1969 Decision

“Students ‘do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate’ and that the First Amendment protects public school students’ rights to express political and social views”

What this means

- You have a right to freedom of speech and expression (this does not include hate speech)
- You have a right to protest, hand out flyers, or petitions



Student Activism

- **Dress Code:** dress codes are completely legal, but they cannot* discriminate based on gender or the message of your clothing
- **Walkouts:** students are required to go to school, but you cannot* be disciplined based on what event you are protesting

* cannot ≠ will not. Legally they are not allowed to, but students rarely understand or have the resources to maintain their rights.

Solutions to Book Censorship.

Talk to teachers and educators about what you want to learn.

Check books out of your school & public library. Request more books.

Start banned book clubs and/or advocate through protest.

Be informed about what decisions are being made at your school.



— Student Activism Activity

Using the case study you were given, develop a plan individually or with a group that you, as a student, could have utilised to support/go against your book challenging scenario.

This is entirely based on **your own** opinions.

Keep these questions in mind:

- What is an effective way to get support from students, teachers/educators, and parents?
- How can you make sure your actions don't violate school code?
- Which rights are you protecting?

Share out in 10 mins.





5 MIN SURVEY

Closing activity.



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 **THANK YOU!**



Sources

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